





OLD WHITEY'S CHRISTMAS TROT. Dob 6-
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STORY FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

BY

A. OAKLEY HALL.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS, BY THWAITES.

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Contents.

	Page
TROT PRELIMINARY.—Wherein the Author gives an Apology for Trotting at all	9
TROT THE FIRST.—The Kitchen Cabinet hold a warm Discussion over a Range of Topics, and Butler Daniels grows eloquent over his Master's Eccentricity	13
TROT THE SECOND.—Mr. Flawler in his Library: the Barrister and the Fire grow contemplative together over a youthful Wrong ...	23
TROT THE THIRD.—The Past gives up a Portrait and a Letter, to the Astonishment of Butler Daniels and the Agitation of his Master	33
TROT THE FOURTH.—Simon Lobb wakes up: taking Time by the Forelock, and Old Whitey by the Mane, introduces a wonderful Horse	47
TROT THE FIFTH.—Wall Street by Night, with a knowing Attorney taking care of its Virtue	61
TROT THE SIXTH.—The Story of the Will, and how the Barrister got the best of Death	75
TROT THE SEVENTH.—A New York Omnibus has a singular Fare on a stormy Night, and what came of it	89

	Page
TROT THE EIGHTH.—Alice Sparkler as a Winter Beauty. The Rector makes the acquaintance of the Wall Street Attorney, and Old Whitey is in danger of being petted to death	103
TROT THE NINTH.—Mrs. Mount's Family consists of an Omnibus-driver, a Model Policeman, one of the Literati, and a promising Law Clerk. They have an Evening together	115
TROT THE TENTH.—The Law receives some hard Knocks, and retires to take breath during A DUTCHMAN'S MAGIC SLEIGH-RIDE	129
TROT THE ELEVENTH.—The virtuous Attorney puts the Engine of the Law in motion against Old Whitey, and blinds the other Eye of Justice. Butler Daniels thinks there is a Baby in the case..	155
TROT THE TWELFTH.—Old Whitey makes his Debut on the Bloomingdale Road, and is recognized by the wooden-legged Hostler as a knowing Horse	175
TROT THE THIRTEENTH.—After Old Whitey's sudden pull-up, Mrs. Mount and the Omnibus-driver take the matrimonial Reins, and the Baby in the case turns up	187
TROT THE FOURTEENTH.—Sunday at Millward Grove, and how Old Whitey's Disappearance changed the Aspects of every thing and affected every body, and the Militia Major in particular	195
TROT THE FIFTEENTH.—The Deputy Sheriff and the Wall Street Attorney are Nonsuited, while Alice Sparkler and Old Whitey have the entire Court in their favor, and there are great Christmas Rejoicings	209
TROT THE SIXTEENTH.—The third Christmas at Millward Grove, and how all the Characters made themselves merry, and Old Whitey takes his last Trot	225

Illustrations.

	Page
I. The Cottage.....	9
II. Members of the Kitchen Cabinet of the Flawler Administration	15
III. The Imps of the Grate contemplating the great Wall Street Lawyer	25
IV. The little Passenger of the burning Steamer	35
V. Old Whitey at Home receiving Calls	49
VI. The Debtor receiving No for an Answer in the Wall Street Law-office: with a new Statue of Justice.....	63
VII. Death turning to Stone the obdurate Heart of the vindictive Parent	77
VIII. The Omnibuses in the Snow-storm	91
IX. The Reverend Matthew Sparkler and his Daughter Alice at the Rectory door.....	105
X. The Model Policeman gaping for his Supper: with the surprised Visitants.....	117
XI. Hans Von Ritternuts and Johannes Fraust taking a Christmas Sleigh-ride.....	131

	Page
XII. Meeting between the Law-clerk, the Rector, and Old Whitey	157
XIII. Old Whitey and the Wooden-legged Hostler holding a Levee	177
XIV. William Mount and his Wife having a Breakfast Talk together.....	189
XV. The Tea-party of the Widow Nichols	197
XVI. Old Whitey's triumphant Return to the Rectory	211
XVII. Old Whitey in his Green Old Age recognizes the Lovers..	227



MONTAGNIE COTTAGE.

Preliminary Trot.

TO GENERAL GEORGE P. MORRIS.

Montagnie Cottage, Fishkill Landing, August, 1856.

MY DEAR GENERAL,—Having stolen a few days of leisure, and laid the professional oar temporarily on a shelf, I find myself your neighbor, separated from Under Cliff by *only* a huge mountain, behind which I hourly hear the roar of the railway train as it rattles by your cosy retreat.

—Find myself your neighbor, to think over the many

pleasant hours we have enjoyed together, discussing both rhyme and reason over the sparkling hues of — that which it was lately accounted heterodox in law to hint of beyond a whisper; and to remember, by the aid of a prattling reminiscent by my side, the promise I made you years ago in the little parlor of a certain St. John's Park mansion wherein we househanded together. It was on a merry Christmas evening, and the story of "Old Whitey's Christmas Trot" had been read aloud, the whiler of the passing hour.

Quoth the general, "Thou shalt publish it some day."

Quoth the author, "When?"

"When the salt of a few years has been rubbed into its leaves, and when yonder child of thine has grown enough to climb upon your knee and ask her papa for a story."

Quoth the author, "Good!"

We shook hands over it, did we not?

And now the child has stolen to my side as I sit on the wide piazza gazing through the Rumsey Woods upon Newburgh Bay, and upon the sunny slopes of New Windsor, and upon the hazy hills of Cornwall, and down into the very dells of Idlewild, wherein our friend Willis dwells, and she asks papa for a story.

It is here—altered somewhat, and I hope improved—not alone for her, but for juveniles in general; and for grown folks too, if, mayhap, they love the good old fashion of the Christmas tale in simple dress.

Were this more than a holiday trifle, I should feel as if there ought to be a dedication in the case. I should be disposed to think of you in the plainest print as my father's comrade and my early friend—to talk of you as one of the most indefatigable gardeners in the field of American periodical literature, and living to see flower in most worthy perfection many of the seedlings that you sowed broadcast in the "Mirror" volumes—to think of your melodies that are every where household music, and to not forget the kindly impulses of a yet juvenile heart. But, trifle as our Christmas story is, the dedication must wait for a future day, until it may come in better apparel.

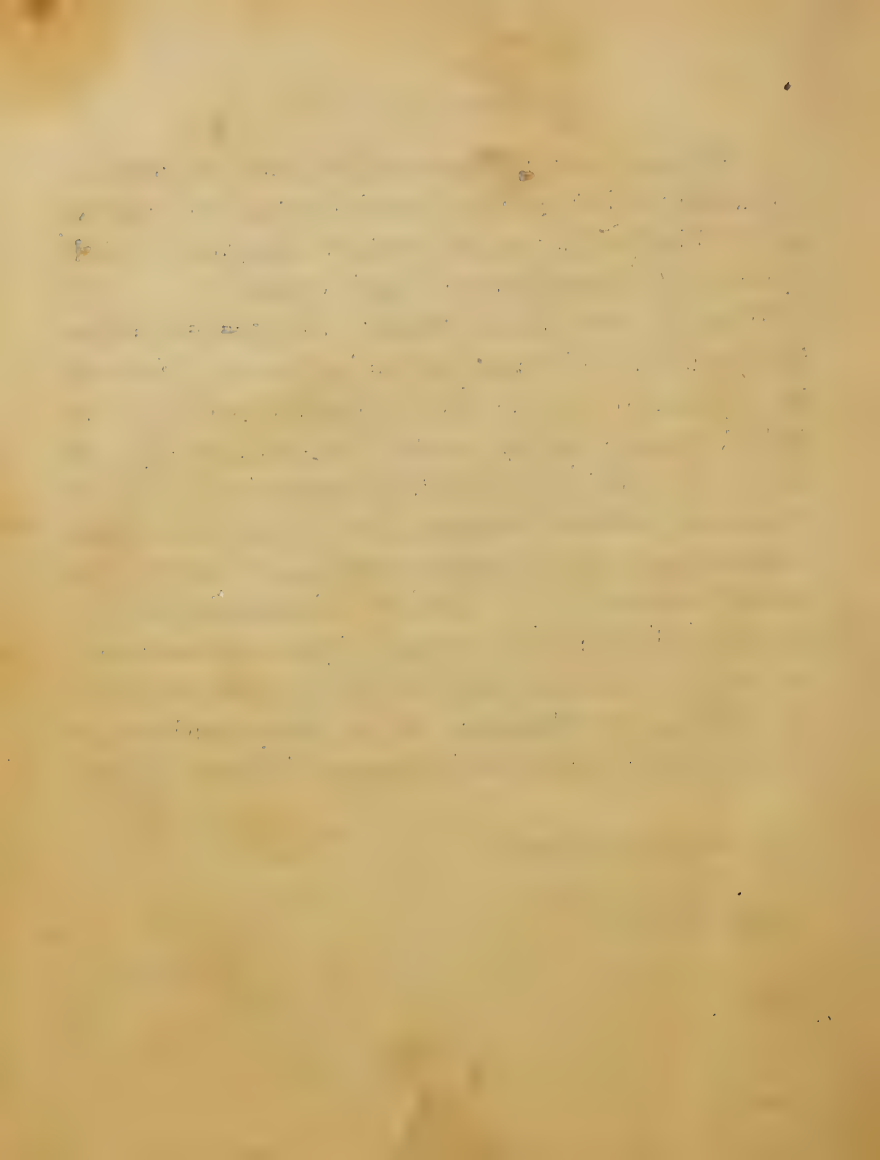
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"But, papa, the story!"

* * * * *

And here it is.

A. O. H.



Trot the First.

their papers, and immediately begged pardon for the unworthy suspicions they had entertained, not only of their own master, but of Mr. Daniels's master.

"Lor, you confused me quite; 'twas said so all of a sudden. Daniels, you're an oratur—an oratur, Daniels," said the cook.

"I was so afeerd," began housemaid, "that some trouble had come to him. He's a dear good man as had never taken wife or had babies to plague servants."

"No better for being a bachelor," said butler Daniels, with some asperity, and looking at cook.

That member of the home department cast her eyes coquettishly on the boiler, then at boiling heat.

"No better, either, for having no babies," added the lord of the pantry, and looking at the housemaid.

That member of the home department looked at a bit of looking-glass over the kitchen dresser, and blushed.

Daniels continued: "By being gone for, I means, of course, touched—out of his head—moozy—crazy!" And, in pantomimic explanation, he laid his finger to his forehead and snapped his thumb pityingly.

Cook and housemaid united in a little theatrical shriek expressive of consternated surprise.

"Lor, Daniels, how you do go on," says cook.

"Yes, indeed, Daniels," echoed the maid, moving her chair nearer to that of her coadjutor, and dropping her

voice to a stage whisper, "how you do go on, to be sure!"

Daniels had "gone on" in manner like this for a great many times before upon other topics. Daniels was fond of sensations; and sensations, with consequential airs, were the nervous antidotes which he unsparingly administered, and encouraged to some degree, in all other kitchen cabinets.

He took up his leg again as if it had given him a twitch, and settling that member to his satisfaction, continued—his countenance brightening like that of every actor will when producing a sensation. Daniels felt that box, pit, and gallery were hanging on his words.

"Not raving, you know, cook—nor dangerous, so as to require corsets—"

"Jackets," interrupted the maid.

"Of course, jackets—straight up and down jackets—laced up before and behind. Not them, Elly—not them at all!"

Elly, the "fond" for Ellen, was the name of the housemaid, who, having an uncle in a distant county, something of a farmer and very much of a money-saver, and of late in delicate health, and without wife or children, had been lately of great interest in the eyes of Daniels.

"No, no," added the butler, "nothing not respectably crazy—moral insane, as the lawyers say in the newspaper

yonder—maybe I might say 'centric. 'Centric, you know, cook, sich as them spirit people are."

"Oh, the liquor men," says cook, who was like a young swimmer led out of depth by an elder.

Daniels shook a decided negative.

"Nonsense, cook, he means the pribitory folk," said housemaid, coquettishly, who became more at her ease as the butler increased in familiar loquacity.

"I means wot I says," added Daniels, pettishly—"the rappers—and that is the whole of it. There is a power of difference between crazy and 'centric, you know, girls."

Cook, who was lingering on the verge of fifty, and was yet a spinster, here looked gratefully amiable at the word "girls," and picking up the "Daily Times," commenced to fan herself with juvenile smirking, the shadow of her large fat arm falling on the wall like a house-timber shaking with an ague.

"Some are death on razors," added Daniels, loth to quit his theme; "some are sweet on clothes-lines and attic beams; some go the chemists, as makes mistakes in the Epem salts line, and—"

"Just so my cousin Popes, who kept a—"

"Your pardon, cook," interposed Daniels, with dignity; "we'll hear of Popes another time; we're on master now."

Cook rolled the aforesaid cousin into the paper, and threw him in the coal-hod.

"But what put you to saying this?" asked the maid, hastily interposing an idea from her store of curiosity so as to restore the offended dignity of her coadjutor.

"Why I say master is crazy-like or 'centric is this: Who ever saw him crying?" And Daniels measured out the introduction to the question as if it was a demolisher and a crusher; but he popped out the quere as if it was a bullet; then wiping his eyes like a true sportsman, he peered through the smoky atmosphere of the kitchen to see what effect his shot had given.

Cook and housemaid were speechless.

"Yet my own eyes—these eyes as never wore spectacles, nor never will," added Daniels, settling his wig, "they saw master weep, and he's a weeping now, or I'm a tea-pot."

In one sense Daniels was a tea-pot, his strong mixtures of rhetoric never nervously affecting himself.

"I do believe it's love," cried Elly, the maid.

"I'd as soon suspect cook, there, of forgery!" replied the butler. "Master's swallowed too much calf-skin and red tape in his profession to be in love at his time of life."

Between master and butler there were three years' difference in favor of the former; and Daniels, the day before, in solemn confidence with the census-taker, had confessed, with fine and imprisonment before his eyes, to fifty.

“It’s no more nor less than a pictur’ and a letter. He came home very early to-day; and such a rummagin’ as he made in the garret, among the things as have been put up there these ever so many years, and I’ve been here ten years come Christmas. In all that time master never went into the third story afore. Down stairs he came, bringing an old pictur’ of a lady, which he wiped off so carefully. And at dinner he never touched the soup or curry, but requested to be left alone with the dessert and a letter—that is, he didn’t *say* a letter, but I saw it by his plate; not a new one, as might come by mail, but stained and musty. It’s my opinion that it was brought him by that old woman whom Millings said was in master’s office-room so long yesterday, and who had no business specially either, for not a writ or paper was asked for.”

“Heaven send it’s nothing awful. It’s a nice place,” said cook, looking absently at a plate of meat pie, which was on the range in process of warming for a hot bite before bed-time.

“Yes, indeed,” sighed the housemaid, corroboratively, and fixing her blue eyes on the portly form of Daniels, who, to her, poor country girl, was an imbodiment of every thing handsome and grand in a city beau.

“Yet now I remember,” added the butler, shaking himself by the neckcloth, as if to clear his brain, “I heard

from Bottles, my predecessor, something about a trouble master had with his sister, who married wrongly, and went away and died, or something, just as he was getting rich, and all that. Maybe it's her."

The surmises which cook felt to be now becoming interesting, and fast supplanting the warming meat pie, were here suddenly turned astray by the ringing of the bell sharply and quickly.

"It's master, now," said Daniels, flying to the door, despite his gout and dignity, while his remaining members of the kitchen cabinet rose from their chairs to gaze at his retreating steps, as if to find some clew to the wonderful activity and anxiety of the butler.

Trot the Second.





Trot the Second.

THE conferences upon which Mr. Daniels, by his hasty action, so unceremoniously closed the door, and which were of such kitchen moment, occurred in the basement of a snug old Knickerbocker mansion fronting upon St. John's Park, in that quarter of New York city so long consecrated to the cosiness of unpretending wealth—so

long consecrated before the bustling rail-road traffic came to despoil the park and the park mansions of their charms—to settle the dust upon the ancient trees, and shake the grass roots of the olden sod that knit in beautiful surface the velvet lawn.

Within this mansion, close beside the dignified church beauty of St. John's—and long may its spire frown upon others that mock the air with meretricious ornament, and surmount temples of God that only rest the thoughts on man and man's own gaudy, tasteless handiwork—for more than twenty years had resided Robert Flawler, a bachelor and a barrister—a man who shunned the world, and whom the world's social touch had shunned in return, but whose opinion as a lawyer was as high in the mercantile world as was his note of hand, when, in the years gone by, he chose to make it.

He was now sitting in his arm-chair by the large table in his library, facing the fire, which was going out.

The fire was going out.

It had been a strong and lusty fire in its infancy at early morning, when Daniels had come into the room shivering with the December cold, in his dressing-gown, and with cotton night-cap on his wigless pate, to see that the fire had been properly made, and that the room was getting warm, and that the large arm-chair was rightly placed, and that the morning paper was on the mantel

corner by the old warrior in bronze mail, who, from his high position, daily defied to a mortal tilting the swinging drop of the chandelier opposite; it had been then a strong and lusty fire, roaring through the narrow chimney passage in the very teeth of the wintry wind, which had moaned over the house-top all the chilly night through. It had burned on well, and kept up a good reputation, too, through breakfast-time; and while the clothier's boy waited in the passage outside for Daniels, who was at lunch, and who, as he waited, shivered the more as he espied the fire-light under the door, and glimmering through the key-hole, although he stood by the dull hall stove—so pleasant was it to see a blaze while the snow swept madly through the streets, and over the wide park area without. And although the fire had sulked when, all the morning after lunch-time, there came no one by to feel its warmth, or take a cheering from its presence, and had seemed desirous of retiring into ashy oblivion, toward evening it had rallied again, in compliment to a hodful of Liverpool coal, and burned brightest of the day's labors, when its stern old master came in to fill the apartment with his sighings from the old arm-chair, and comfort the mantel warrior with sympathetic, grim, defying looks.

But, as if in revenge for the inattention of the proud old lawyer, who sat, the hour after dinner, motionless,

with a letter crumpled in his hand, the fire had gone into decline, and now threatened to go out.

First the blaze upon the top had crawled along the outermost ridge of coal, burning spittingly as it went into a corner, and there, as a blaze, decently died; then it had glowed and glimmered from its red-hot bed, repentingly, as if about to be as social as ever; then it contented itself in keeping its vivid energies exclusively in the middle, while the sides of the grate grew black and cold; then it put on a thin veil of red ashes; next it darkened all over, and shook itself at intervals into the pan below, until now but a few paling sparks were left beyond the power of charcoal or "blower" to raise into a blaze.

Shadows were in the room in every part. Under the heavy curtains, where the richly-burnished mountings shone no more reflectingly; by the side of the heavy chairs, and along the rims of the mirrors; under the gloomy card-tables, and by the cornices of the book-case; across the corner of the ceiling mouldings; over the head of the mantel warrior, and over the clock—its hands now close upon the hour of nine—as if the shadows were canopies of darkness purposely made.

And the wind without blew as it had blown all day, making the outside shutters shiver, and, no longer afraid of heat, was coming down the chimney, as if in triumphal entry over the conquest.

But forgetful of fire, and heedless of wind and shadow, still Robert Flawler sat motionless, as he sat the hour before, his hand pressed to his forehead, his elbow leaned upon the velvet chair-arm, and his eyes fixed on the wreathing figures of the carpet.

There were shadows in the room, but there was on his heart the deepest shadow of them all, you may be sure of that, so tightly met his lips, and so gaspingly the nostrils spread and fell as the noiseless breath passed through them.

He started up as the portly form of Daniels, entering through the door, cast yet another shadow in the room, and stared inquiringly at his servant.

“Oh, it is you!”

Sounding much as if he had expected some one else, or had been raising in his thoughts some mental shadow that could be produced before him.

“The bell, sir!” was the answer.

“You are mistaken, Daniels, I have not rung.” The reply was given in a mild and low tone. The lawyer was himself again. You could not have told from face or speech that aught a moment before had turned his self-possession, or that any ugly thoughts had turned to worrying wrinkles on his brow.

Daniels stared in amazement. The bell had rung, and sharply. He had heard it plainly. All had heard it.

More proof that master was clean gone for it and needed jackets.

Just as the abashed butler was framing some excuse, a bell was heard again, abruptly pulled. The startled butler muttered, "Ah, the street door," and turned to go, tapping his gouty member as he went, as if in penance for his first mistake.

He went toward the street door and opened it. A gust of wind came rushing in, flaring the gas-light in the hall, and racing up the stairway to the roof.

A thinly-clad woman, covered with snow, and holding a shattered umbrella, stood within the porch.

Scanning her quickly, the irate butler cried, "Well—well—what now? Speak quick; it's cold."

He needed not to tell that to the shivering form before him, whose lips moved, as the teeth chattered behind them, as if vainly trying to say something. At length they said, "Mr. Flawler."

Even the dignity of Daniels thawed to see those lips and hear the chattering sound. Pulling her in and hastily shutting the door, he beckoned her to a seat beside the hall stove, which hissed at her approach, as the drop of snow fell upon its glowing surface.

"What shall I say?"

"Take this to him, and say she's here," was the answer, in the same chattering tones; and she held forth a

dirty, faded, crumpled envelope, of a letter size. Daniels clutched it greedily, as if it was to afford him a clew to all his troubles on the subject of his master's state, and took it to the gas-light.

A simple direction of a woman's name to some obscure street in the eastern part of the city, and in the well-known writing of Robert Flawler.

The mystery was only deepened.

He took it in, and, soon returning, led her into the room.

Trot the Third.



Trot the Third.

THE silent sitter in the shadow-peopled room looked fiercely up as the door opened to admit them. The woman and he had met before, 'twas clear! Even Daniels conjectured this, as he saw the motion of his master toward a chair, and heard the formal tones say, "Daniels, you need not wait. I'll ring when ready."

The butler bowed and left the room, lingering slightly by the stove to see if the stranger guest had left any token of her presence by which to satisfy his curiosity. Finding none, he whistled low, and, patting his leg confidentially, went down stairs.

The woman, as she glided to a velvet seat, looked complainingly at the ashes in the grate, then shivering somewhat, turned her eyes upon the lawyer. He held a letter in his hand, grasping a corner of it tightly and passionately, as though the throat of the writer was there instead—a punishment for crimes conceived, or injuries too well put into execution.

He saw the glance, and, before she had time to speak, began :

“Is it more money that you want? Was I not liberal at my office last week? Do you want more gold for probing an old wound that has long been healed?”

She partly rose from her chair, as if to speak; but, choking with impatient emotion, he heeded her not, and continued :

“More money for inflicting a fresh stab upon my heart?”

“That heart,” he added, turning aside as if soliloquizing to himself, and dropping his voice to a whisper, “which I had steeled, I thought, to all human affection, and whose old grief I had shelved in memory’s chamber?”

"Until you brought this letter to my office"—here he flung it on the table in a crumpled mass, and then, with sudden inconsistency, caught it up and smoothed it into the proper folds—"I had forgotten that mistaken marriage."

He put his hand within his breast as if to wrench some ugly matter from his heart, and turned upon his chair.

She stared at him in wonderment and scarcely dared to speak. Her glances showed that she was ignorant of what he talked about. His words betrayed that he spoke rather to himself than to her.

Finding he had relapsed into thought, smoothing the letter again and again—the letter, that showed the delicate tracery of woman's pen upon its surface—she broke the silence.

"No more money, Mr. Flawler—none. You have been munificent enough. Time was when I should have taken none; but now—"

She gathered her shawl about her shiveringly, and glanced with moistened eyes about the sumptuous room, and added,

"My services were slight, and quite unconscious. When I brought the letter I should have given you this."

And she brought out a coral necklace—a string of corals, rather, which babies wear, and of olden shape and style. Upon the clasp was graven "Arthur."

She paused as if for answer. He took it up and saw the name.

"My father's name. Perhaps her—her—but no—it could not be."

He clutched the bawble eagerly, and his eyes wandered to a corner of the room in a recess by one of the book-cases, where, hidden from all eyes but his, stood an old and faded portrait of a girl. On this he fixed his eyes, and sat, minute after minute, unconscious of all else.

She rose to go, and said,

"It was found in the same rubbish-pile in the dark closet in which we turned up the old letter with your address—the one upon the table there. I brought it to-night through all the storm because you seemed to take on so about the letter in your office."

He dropped the bawble on the table, and with the same tearing gesture toward his heart, answered,

"Take on! But not one word of that; you promised it, you know. Woman, your eyes have seen me in my proud strength, within my office, at whose closed door a crowd of clients waited battle, with grief and remorse suddenly stirred up."

Again turning to the picture, he said, in lower tones, "But I was foolish to suppose that Time and Art could conquer Nature in her strongest and most sacred hold."

He seemed to think that even to her some sort of ex-

planation was due. She was by the door, and his hand was on the bell to ring for Daniels once again, when he said, in choking voice,

“The letter comes as from the dead—a sister’s message dictated by a stranger’s hand—the bawble hers, perhaps. She wedded my enemy, and I drove her from my door. This sudden finding of yours has—

“But go; you know enough.”

She came a step toward him, pity in her glances, and said, “And one thing more. I made the inquiries you spoke of. The room in which, so lately, my sick husband and myself took lodging, has been desolate these twelve years back—perhaps more. There was a goblin story and a foolish tale which frightened applicants away.”

He scarcely seemed to hear, but rang the bell; and Daniels, quick and eager, showed the stranger out.

The door had scarcely closed when he caught the corals to his lips, then placed the portrait by his side and wiped it off again and again, as if repenting of the past neglect.

It was a lovely face which shone upon him even through the canvas, scratched by ruthlessness, and covered with the soils of forgotten years. The jet-black curls, parted carelessly over a broad white forehead, streamed lightly in the air, casting a chastening shadow over the round and rosy cheeks beneath. The eyes were full of

gentleness and love, and looked as if a pettish speech or unkind word would blind them as if they were struck by lightning. The face was smiling too, the lips apart, as if some pleasant thought, in musical tones, had struggled from the sitter's heart, and which the artist strove to paint.

He gazed for a moment, and, sinking back into his chair, mused in the deepening shadows, as the candles, one by one, were burned out.

Back, back his memory glanced to where a pale face from a pillow looked upon him, and a wan hand was placed upon his head, and the voice of a dying father blessed him and his infant sister, who, a few weeks old, lay on the lap of a weeping lady by the bedside—to where his mother, dressed in ugly black, and weeping every hour, bade him kneel down and pray for her and for his little helpless sister, now, like him, all fatherless on earth—to where, amid pleasant fields, he sported among the flowers, where his sister shone the fairest blossom of all, while gentle, motherly eyes looked pleasantly on—to where, in growing boyhood, in the grim winter time, he joined his comrade boys in lending her a share in all their winter sports, and with them drew his sister on the sled toward the little school-house, and felt such honest pride in her as all the girls came running out to greet their favorite with a kiss—to where, in all the pride of conscious knowledge, he wiped the ink from off the blur-

ring page, and, setting all the tasks aright, looked up into beaming eyes to see the thanks where words were weak to speak—to when, by the birth-day gathering or Christmas fireside, his mother and his sister Agnes, growing more beautiful day by day, sat to welcome him home from school and college, where, to believe their own proud hearts, he shone the proudest of his proud compeers—to when, by the bedside of his dying mother, she bade him take his sister's hand in his, and promise her, before high heaven, then so near through her oncoming death, to love and cherish her, and be her protection evermore.

As he cast back his thought, and let it wander through forgotten recesses in his memory, there was not a scene of happiness or hour of joy in all his boyhood of which his sister had not been a part and actor. Why, what a recreant to his nature had he been to forget all these, that hapless day, and all time since! Was human love so very light a thing that one poor foolish hate could bury it so deeply in the past? He thought of this, and tears came welling up and pouring through his hands.

“The time will come, my brother dear, when all that pride and fell ambition may suggest will never eat away the memory of your love for me, and you will deeply mourn these words, which convict you of high perjury unto your mother's dying bed, as thus you drive your sister from your door.”

And these were very near the words which she had spoken as she stood, that bright May morning, leaning on the arm of one whom then the first day she called husband ; one who was her brother's enemy her judgment knew ; but love had whispered, under favor of the past, "His sister's husband never can be his enemy. He will forgive."

But he did not forgive, and spurned. He heard of her no more, and slander doubly came to add fuel to his hate. And he was vexed that no more reference was made to him—no deprecating word, no letter, no inquiring message ; nothing of the kind. He had opened his heart to the world, and the world had come in and filled his sister's place. But the memory of her familiar way of speech, and her words of piety where scorn should have been, had hunted out the world again, and there was yet the void his sister—his dead sister—could not fill. He had bethought him of the forgotten portrait, and, that afternoon, had dug it out of household rubbish with an eager toil.

Again he looked upon it. There was a stain close by the heart, which, to his excited vision, looked like blood. His punishment was come. Pride and ambition, as his sister said would come to pass, had fled. His vow before his mother's dying bed was hissed into his ears by a hundred invisible voices.

He took the letter out again, and read :

“MY DARLING BROTHER,—This is written by a kindly stranger hand. I am dying. My husband—forgive me, Robert, for placing him before you, but there can not be a hold for malice in the grave—perished yesterday, and I am alone with my poor baby boy, but six weeks old ; the age—you remember it, Robert—that your sister was when our own father died. We were returning to New York from our Western home ; the vessel burned, and nearly all on board have gone down to death. As I stood on the burning hulk, my husband by my side, my infant at my breast, the air so hideous with despair, the wreathing flames eating their way toward us, I thought I saw you in the smoky clouds about looking upon us with such evil eye. I know this can not be. I know that you will mourn me and forgive me now. I would have asked your pardon once more, and counted the hours which moved between our meeting. I would have brought to you my baby boy—I named him Arthur : ’twas our father’s name—you could not have resisted him. My husband started with me to the shore ; but suddenly I missed him ; and I, all badly burned, a shocking sight to see, came to the shore, my baby boy unhurt. I can not live the day, they say ; but to your care I commend my child. Kind friends will bear him to your home.”

The letter was not even signed. The paper was stained by time’s decay upon it in the garret loft where it had lain for nearly twenty years.

Thus had she died—“a shocking sight to see !” And he the cause ! Those delicate limbs were tortured ; and that gentle face which now looked from the canvas was the last gazed upon by curious, stranger eyes.

But then the baby boy !

He might be yet alive. He was; he felt it in his heart, assuaging the dreadful load which seemed to have settled on it, and which he was fain to pull away with physical force. The mission of his life would be to find the boy. If found, no wealth too great, no home too splendid, no station too lofty for his sister's child—his Agnes's baby boy.

He sat and mused upon it, and only rose once to turn the gas yet lower in the socket, as if he craved the darkness.

And so he sat; not awake—not asleep; half in the present—half in the past—dreamingly.

This the vision ever before his eyes:

A wide waste of waters; then a steam-boat glancing its merry lights upon the sparkling waves; the stars in solemn watching for the night; the musical plash of the wheels the only sound about. A sudden creaking of ropes and chains; a louder plashing from the sides; a shrieking puff of steam; a hurrying to and fro; a voice of loud command; increasing trampling; ascending clouds of smoke; some smothered cries; accelerated shrieks; a spire of flame; a trumpet breathing dull sounds; a clattering bell; decks white with shrieking or palsied humanity fresh from the bright dreams of healthful life; a fall of heavy weights; a drifting hulk; glancing flames and frantic gestures; a red light for miles

and miles over the broad waste of waters ; dark masses in the waves ; gurglings ; arm-plashings ; the shore nearing ; and one lithe girlish figure to a barrel lashed, drifting to the beach with something in her arms !

A log cabin ; a dying woman on a rude bed ; tearful eyes turned upon a sleeping infant ; a blotted letter ; a gesture to it ; a death groan ; and still the infant laughing in its pure slumber.

What wonder that the big arm-chair moved in sympathetic agony as its occupant writhed and seemed to wish to tear an ugly something from his heart ?

And so he still sat when daylight came, and Daniels, glancing in, went down the kitchen way to say to cook that he was surely right—she might herself see if master was not clean gone for it ; for he had not been to bed. Was ever the like known before in the Flawler mansion ?

Trot the Fourth.



Trot the Fourth.

HE gaped once and rolled over his doubled-up pillow with a sudden wrench of his shoulder, which, if his neck had not been the plowman, rustic neck it was, would have snapped in twain like an old pipe-stem. Next, he pulled up his knees, as if studying a new angle in geometry. Then he raised his hand from under the bed-clothes

to scratch away a bit of crusted rheum by his eyelid; and, as his hand went down, gently paused half way to scratch his nose, which looked as frosty as a forgotten beet in the garden. Now he gaped again and took a stretch, which tossed the covering aside as if it had been a surf-wave beating on the beach. Then he yawned aloud, and struck out, like a swimmer, at the foot-board, striking which violently with his heel, the concussion caused him to open one eye. Again, having refreshed himself with gape number three, he opened another eye, and, turning over to the window, looked without.

Simon Lobb was now awake.

For a moment he seemed disposed to doze again, and had flattened down his pillow and readjusted his coverings, when a sharp whirring of the kitchen clock hard by, followed by seven sharp strokes of its hammer, caused him to spring upon the floor and address himself to toilet with vigorous energy.

“An hour behind my time, and the snow four foot at least upon the ground. Luckily, master was scribbling ever so late in the library last night, and breakfast will be behind.”

Here Mr. Lobb's soliloquy was temporarily interrupted by the breaking of a button upon his trowsers waistband, and the flying back, with a loud twang, of the imprisoned suspender. But he was accustomed—like Na-

poleon in his later days—to disaster; although, unlike that great warrior, it made him no less a philosopher; so he pulled from his pocket a knife and a piece of twine, and slicing out enough of the cloth to admit a small-sized clothes-line, tied his shoulders down again with savage firmness, as if they were captives at a stake of torment.

“Snow! if there’s a thing I hate, it’s snow (here a gathering up of his large, double-breasted, fiery-red waist-coat) and shoveling (here a fling of it over the arms). Then ‘Old Whitey’ is so very tender in his (here a plunge for his frieze coat in a corner) legs, and the snow balls so badly in his hoofs, that master won’t let him be driven (here an elevating of a small triangular bit of looking-glass, and a rub of a brush over his head) on a hard trot, which is the only (rub) way that a horse (rub) ought to go over a good ice (rub) packed road.”

At this juncture of his spasmodic soliloquy, laying down the brush, Mr. Lobb gave his body a vigorous shaking, like another Samson, to satisfy himself he was in full strength, and prepared to go out doors.

Simon Lobb was the man of all work, who lived with the Reverend Matthew Sparkler, rector in the pleasant Hudson River village of Millward Grove. In summer time he aired his labors among the farmers all about, and did the rector’s “chores” at nightfall or at early morning

time; but now it was winter, and the cider was all made about—very much to Simon's regret, for he was fond of playing with a straw near cider-press yards—and the plowing for the spring crops was done a while ago. So Simon took his time at bringing water, and taking care of the cow, and attending faithfully to "Old Whitey."

"Old Whitey" was a famous horse! Rather high upon the age-thermometer of horse-flesh, so to speak, and somewhat scoffed at by ignorant youngsters, to whom all horses were unworthy the regard of men of spirit, except those with docked tails and panting nostrils, capable of going their mile in two minutes on a level road, and in four, at least, up hill, leastwise of a boy of pluck, who had learned to taste tobacco. He was white in body, with a grayish tail. His mane was hung beside his neck like the locks of an aged Druid priest, except when Alice Sparkler braided them, and then they timed themselves in flapping on his neck to the measured movement of his trot. He had served well in the Florida war, when he was in his prime, and with his snort, like that from the free nostrils of the prairie or mountain colt, could startle any savage rifle-aim from its true line; and in army tradition he had earned a name for patience and endurance many another horse might have been proud to claim. Leaving the army and the din of war, he had sought the stable of a man of peace—the rector of the village lately

named—and his name, well earned by foremost deeds, of “Old Whitey,” had followed him to private life. He rapidly grew into the character of favorite, for his instinct had assumed a gentle, fondling phase. His master’s step he knew before the little paddock gate was reached; and the ring of Alice Sparkler’s joyous laugh brought from the little stable window such a hearty series of neighs, that the barn-fowls cackled and quacked in wondering chorus. All the parishioners knew him; and some were known to leave their bars down by the clover fields to give “Old Whitey” a hearty meal; for the bullet-scratches by his neck, where the hairs had turned their color, appealed so deeply to the patriotism of all. The blacksmith, when he made his luckiest hit in shoes and nails, would lay them by against “Old Whitey’s” next shoeing-time. And Lawrence Mullins, the miller, hard by, whose father, in the old country, over the sea, had been a United Irishman, and taught his son respect for arms and all that belonged to its profession, had several times sent his own horse, Charlie, to the rector, begging him to use him for the plowing his potato patch, and never let the horse “who had seen service” demean himself to turning up the soil, or bowing his nature to the service of a cart.

But Old Whitey bore his honors with a modest front. He never swerved from his equanimity except on village

training-days, when the major of the town sent in his compliments for the horse, and his strong assurances he should be well cared for on parade. Upon these occasions, when the blue and silver trappings were upon his back, and on his head, and all about his neck, and when he saw the shadow of the major's plume go bobbing on the ground before his onward path, and when he heard the brass band from the county town hard by play old, familiar strains, his neck would arch, his nostrils swell, his eyes dilate, his ears erect themselves, and all the blood within his body feed the veins to bursting. Then he would look proudly on, or prance about the little groups that gathered around his unaccustomed antics. He seemed to say in every movement, "Here's a head that never bent when balls from savage rifles whistled around it, and when arrows were thick as rain-drops in the equinoctial time. Here are ears which have listened to the drum and trumpet sounding the charge. My good old major master often shared his wheat cake with me when the camp was hard beset, and horse-feed scarce. You're but a set of holiday soldiers, as I know, as yet, but you may fight some day, and then keep up your spirits as I do. If heart and brain are in their right places within you, you will be as glad as I to hear the drum and fife once more; to see the flag flaunt out upon the breeze; to hear the adjutant call out commands, and to smell the

smoke of even such a little brass cannon as you've got underneath the hill."

Once a year Old Whitey went upon his militia-sprees, and for days thereafter seemed to suffer with a head-ache and from exhausted nerves, when the good rector kept him quiet in his stall, where we may now look upon him, while Simon finds his hat.

Old Whitey was neighing loudly for his morning feed as Simon turned the corner gate; but when he opened the stable door his delight seemed to know no limit—bounds, I was going to say, but, pluming myself upon my strict veracity hereon, I can not, for he jumped and frisked about like an old grandmother learning the polka. The winter wind had broken on his warm retreat through many a crevice, and flakes of snow had given him in his cosy salt-straw bed more of the hydropathic treatment than a pet horse should relish. But when he heard the meal-tub clink upon the mill-stone in the barn, and heard it stirred up to the right consistency of paste—perhaps smelling it in every whiff of cold, frosty air he inhaled, after blowing clouds of warm breath to take the chill off the morning atmosphere about—he recommenced his neighs, and pawed against the floor, and rubbed the manger with his neck, as if the latter had been a plane, and he himself was manufacturer of polished wood.

"Easy, there, Whitey; I must rub it fine, or you'll be

coughing all the day," said Simon, turning round the stick in the meal-tub.

"Un-n-n-nyneigh!" from Old Whitey.

"You've got a cough already, you know you have."

"Non-n-n-nyneigh!"

"And it's a good pull you'll have to-morrow to the lake, when master goes to the grand wedding over there."

"Un-n-nyneigh!" from Old Whitey again.

"There you are, though; a good peck to begin with; stuff away, old boy."

And the old boy, plunging his head into the tub, forgot for the moment all his military glory in the Florida campaign, and munched away with his stubby, ground-down teeth like an alderman at a corporation-snacking in the mystical labyrinths of the tea-room; while Simon, from an inverted barrel near by, stroked his stubby chin, and seemed to count every swallow of the dear old horse. So might the two have eat and watched all day, had not a merry voice come out upon the air and made them both look around; and as they listened, thus it said:

"Oh, never mind the snow, father dear, for me. I've got my famous Lapland boots on, you know; and Old Whitey I must see before I eat my breakfast; for I dreamed of him all night, as the wind, now lulled away to such a bracing air, shook all the house."

"Here comes my young lady. I wish I was a horse

to be smiled upon, as is that horse for every day," said Simon, as the clear voice of joyous girlhood—unmistakable to any stranger in the place—spoke out from the garden gate to a little black cap which covered a gray-haired head put out from an upper window.

And Mr. Lobb, leaping over the bin close by, assumed the pitchfork to throw down a relish of hay to the "munching old boy" of his soliloquy as the door swung open, and the rich, warm sunlight and Alice Sparkler came lightly in together.

"Brave Old Whitey that he is, and at his morning meal," exclaimed she, as at the sound the horse stopped for a moment in his feeding, and gave a low and gentle whinny, thrusting his head out for the accustomed pat. If you ever saw a pleased horse-phiz, there was one to look at, be sure of that. And well it might be pleased, and well the ears might drop upon his head, and well the neck press on the manger's side to get a little closer to the hand so fondlingly put out, and thrust around his neck.

"So, so; no pranks, Sir Whitey," said Alice, laughingly, as the horse was fain to lay his lips against her bonnet; "we will forego all that until your meal is well wiped down with brier-smelling hay.

"'Tis a good horse, 'tis a brave horse," continued she, retiring back a pace or two, as the relinquished head, in

the midst of a suppressed whinny, recommenced the bran-meal breakfast.

The remark was not original that day; the thought was not just then born. She had said and thought the same a hundred times, and the horse knew it all by heart. He had come to expect it. Bless his heaving heart! he could not have relished his daily meals one week at a time, if in that time these delicate attentions of his mistress had been suspended. What to him was the grateful rub of the curry-comb on his heated coat, unless he received each day a patting from that hand? Old Whitey could not have lived a month unless each day he heard her merry voice. Oh, it was confidential too, he knew! Would he have told her cousins from the city (who came up in summer to drink the cream, and crack the eggs so fresh at breakfast-time, and who so daintily crept in with fine lawn dresses to see her famous pet) that she, a woman grown, would pat his forehead or embrace his neck? Not he, indeed! They understood each other well, did Alice Sparkler and Old Whitey. He had long ago passed by his fighting days, but only give him a chance when she was in danger, and what a charge he could have made! And so he ate; dividing his glances between the meal-bran and his smiling mistress, as she stood before him in her radiant beauty on that frosty morning.

"She's a beautiful woman, and that's a certainty,"

thought the horse, still at his meal; "I knew she would be, years ago, when first I came into the rector's family. How well do I remember the afternoon I came, and how the parson lifted her, a little thing, upon my back to walk me round the yard; and how her little hands clapped then with glee; and how proud the old father looked, and read in all her face—I know he did, though I have never seen her, seeing she died before I came into the place—the image of her mother, who must have been young enough to be the old man's daughter instead; and how I watched her grow, from that time until this! She will be marrying soon; but I am getting old, and so the matter will not vary much."

Old Whitey stopped his feeding, and turning up the meal-tub, as a toper might invert his emptied ale-mug at an inn, to signify that he was done, stretched out his head for still another patting, which he got with interest, and then went browsing at the hay, still pursuing his abstracted soliloquy; the while a little by-play and dialogue aside, about his comforts, went on between Alice and Mr. Lobb, whose face was all agrin with every word he spoke.

"She'll marry, and go away, perhaps, and learn to wear fine dresses, and she'll be ashamed to pat Old Whitey's face, and I shall see her smiling countenance no longer over the paddock fence of May afternoons, or hear her singing in the hot forenoons of July as I lie under

the old apple-tree in the orchard, nor bear her on my back by the margin of the river, where, for her sake, I learned to tolerate and show no anger at the flying monster and his clattering, smoking train, which goes beside it at the mountain's base."

And the old horse, quite overcome, sent forth a plaintive whinny, which Alice Sparkler and Simon, still with their talk upon his creature wants, knew at once was meant for water. And straightway such a brimming pail, fresh from a spring that never froze the hardest wintry weather, was placed before him.

Trot the Fifth.





Trot the Fifth.

WALL STREET by night is a very different thing from Wall Street by daylight. The thunders of the omnibuses have ceased to jar its granite. The soles of aching debtors and pains-taking creditors, and the tread of brisk brokers, and haughty bankers, and tripping clerks, have ceased to place their impress on the unresisting pave-

ments. The easy-moving doors of banks and offices no longer swing to and fro as the steady tide of business ebbs and flows through all the portals. The Exchange frowns like a Magog of the city, and the Customs smiles with its whitened front, as if it were the Magog's wife, and twain were keeping watch over the money of the country. The church at the summit of the street keeps quarterly watch for the benefit of the watchmen and police, who, walking under its shadows, harshly echo its chimes with the sharp ring of their clubs on the curbstone. From top to toe the street is torpid, and the buildings rest in quiet, as if intoxicate, in the darkness, from the reelings and the rushings they had witnessed while the sun shone. The ship-masts from the bottom shadow in darkness, or peer in the moonlight to the spire at the top, like weird goblins of the commercial world.

Occasionally late into the evening a few lights remain for nervous porters and overtaxed clerks, watching against the thief, or casting wearying figures, or copying teasing papers from the hieroglyphical draft.

On the same storm-vexed night when Robert Flawler watched its hours out in his uneasy chair, John Millings, his office attorney, and Michael Mount, his office clerk, sat at some pressing work in the Wall Street chambers of the great lawyer.

The office was up a gloomy stairway, and was always

a gloomy place ; but at night—the night of Wall Street, painful, by contrast with its day, to every denizen—the offices and the stairway were grave-like and ghostly. Little of this minded John Millings ; for any thing which gave to law a terrible aspect suited him exactly. For his part, he would have had the offices dark at all times. He would have taken away the busts of old lawyers, dead, buried, and worm-eaten, from their stands upon the book-shelves all about, and have put a few full-length skeletons of convicted murderers in their places. The square tin boxes full of papers piled around he would have shaped like coffins, as a matter of taste.

Not that he was disposed to frighten clients away ; there was no attorney who hunted litigation, when started from its cover, with keener scent ; but it was a matter of opinion with him that law was as necessary to a community as breakfast, and that people would go to law as they would eat and drink. It never entered his brain that, the more frightful the forms of law became, the less desirous were suitors of its acquaintance. The terrors of the law with him made up its dignity. He was never so happy as when inditing a dunning epistle, concluding with, “ If it be not attended to directly, I shall prosecute ; ” often, when finishing one, and signing his name with many flourishes, has he leaned back in his office chair in pleased contemplation of the potent document.

His fancy has followed it into the hands of the hapless debtor. How he will start at the bold writing of the address, or the seal, where Justice, unblinded, holds her scales aloft, as if out of the reach of such poor devils as unfortunate debtors! How the perspiration will cling to his brow as he ponders on the word prosecution—jail and ruin staring him in the face, like a theatre placard from a brick wall, in large, unwieldy capitals with blotted edges! How he will fly to a broker for relief, or, denied that, run to the feet of him (John Millings), begging the delay of one week, as a drowning man begs for a boat! And notwithstanding he sometimes reckoned beyond his host, and encountered those who laughed at law, he named them as blasphemous wretches, and mourned anew that big wigs, black caps, gowns, and sworded sheriff had gone from the annals of American jurisprudence, and thus had been lost most potent exemplars of the majesty of law.

Millings was an old stager, too. He had been the attorney of Robert Flawler these fifteen years. Some of his students were high up on the ladders of fame and fortune, but still he remained stationary, slowly amassing money, and keeping it; gathering, day by day, new precedents to adorn the terror-hedged pathways of the law, as a stork (the attorney among birds) gathers up its nutriment for digestion.

Michael Mount was a young stager, and had been four years in the office. Millings had chosen him from a score of urchins, who, one morning, in answer to an advertisement, clambered up and down the stairway of the Flawler offices, fighting and cursing as they went, lest, like the tribe who chose their longest man for king, the lawyer gentleman up stairs should choose the first boy in the door for office-runner, and the salary of fifty dollars a year. Mike had served as runner well, and, sharp-witted and shrewd of observation, had learned much of men and things in one short year. When a new advertisement appeared, a fresh batch of urchins answered it by fighting on the stairs, and he became inducted into the dignity of office clerk and law student.

So far from becoming imbued with the terrible ideas of law which filled the breast of his preceptor, Millings, he treated it as something of a pleasant farce; and his good-humored face when delivering a dunning epistle had often gone far toward giving its recipient hope and confidence. The longest Chancery document possessed no terrors in its crow tracks for him. The oldest judge at court chambers, with severe eyes behind large spectacles, or the most cynical and snappish ones, were by no means appalling to his nerves. Lawsuits he had come to deem like games of whist, wherein play a wrong card the trick was lost.

And there they sat. Millings, at his little old-fashioned desk, with the quaintly-carved lid and heavy legs, was engaged in the amusement of untying a great heap of papers, flapping his fingers over the edges, and then re-tying them with savage energy. There was a wild enthusiasm that sparkled in his eyes as they glanced over the various endorsements of the papers, rustling in their meaning eloquence. Michael, at a long desk at the extremity of the room, was hurrying quill over paper at a rapid rate, and pausing now and then to glance at the clock over the mantelpiece. Millings had been humming the concluding bars of an opera air, very much to the surprise of his companion, who seemed to be really in hopes that his attorney superior was getting the better of his frigid dignity. Suddenly he stopped his music, and throwing down the huge bundle of folded foolscap sheets, exclaimed, "Ready for the dark pigeon-holes."

Michael paused in his quill-driving, and asked what suit was finished now.

Millings gave a sigh, and answered, "The Tatem suit; I grieve to say it; the good old Tatem suit."

"Glorious!" cried Michael, rising from his chair in a moment of enthusiasm; "and I hope the old lady's got her money?"

"Mount," answered the attorney, shoving his rhetoric into a heroic posture, "Mount, you are incorrigible, and

will never succeed in the profession. Glorious. It is a burning shame, and if the Old Nick hadn't been in Flawler to-day he'd never have done it. The suit was in this office when I came into it, and, if it had been rightly managed, it would never have gone out of it until all the property was gone. A clear five hundred a year lost to the office!"

"I'm glad of it, and I say it's glorious," again repeated Michael. "I was sick of that old heading and all those names; and I believe they will be found grained into my heart, like Calais on the heart of the old queen, as she maintained with her dying breath. But tell me, has the old lady got her money?"

"Paid in a check this afternoon," replied Millings, gazing vacantly at the papers, as if he could galvanize the cause of action into the pristine vigor it had maintained in years back.

"It made my heart sad to see her coming in here every week, with that dingy old hat and mournful face, inquiring, 'Any more chance of a settlement?'"

"She *was* a bore, that's a fact," returned the attorney, misconstruing the tone of the remark from Michael Mount; "many's the time I've turned down a street when I saw her coming, for fear she should ask me the same old question. How old Flawler has stood it I don't know. But her husband was just as bad. Five years,

every week, did he come in with the same question. I never looked into that corner by you, Michael, of a dusky evening, but I thought I saw his ghost sitting in the big arm-chair, rubbing its hands, or smoothing its hair, or blowing its nose—Lord! how he could blow that nose, to be sure!—and asking me with his white lips, ‘Any nearer toward a settlement?’”

“He died just as I came into the office,” continued Michael. “I went to his funeral from Mr. Flawler, to see that the expenses were just as the receiver had it down, and I saw him in his coffin. I’d give an affidavit I heard the old questions, which seemed issuing from his white lips. It was a hard case, and I’m glad it’s settled. Mr. Flawler is getting tired of these old things, but—” and here the young man’s eyes glanced down at the documents he had been writing.

Millings followed the eyes with his own, and gave to his lips the motion of a sneer. “Oh, the Sparkler affair you’re thinking of. We’ve fixed the old parson beautifully though, haven’t we?”

Michael shook his head, and, taking his seat, proceeded to resume his task, while his senior took up the papers in the Tatem suit, and, sighing at every stride he made, went into the little closet where the old papers were stowed away—into the little closet, which smelled, as palpably as vegetable essences, of a sort of charnel

odor, and where the slightest breath brought down the dust from the ceiling and from the shelves in suffocating clouds.

They were fixing the parson, sure enough. The Reverend Matthew Sparkler, who was rector of a little village church not far away from city smoke, had put his name upon the back of a note for some old classmate friend, and thought no more of it. The classmate friend had given it to a publisher for expenses in getting out a theological work, which no one cared to read, and no one, consequently, had bought. The friend had gone away before the note fell due; and one Saturday morning, when the good old rector was touching up a sermon for the next-day service, a neighbor brought him from the post-office a protest and a notice. Early Monday morning he had hastened to the city, and called upon the publisher, who received him with great suavity, and offered him, in the handsomest manner, the five hundred copies of the theological work, then lying snugly in the cellar. The publisher heard all he had to say; admitted it was a hard case—but he must be paid. Away the rector hastened to a lawyer, who heard his story through, and overwhelmed him with a learned disquisition on accommodation paper, and the mode of serving protest; finally ending by assuring his eager listener that he had a complete defense—that, if he would trust to him, he would get him

off the debt at once. The publisher, of course, sued for his money, and Robert Flawler brought the action. The rector journeyed several times to town, and signed and swore to several papers, which, the more he tried to understand, the less he knew about. The trial day came on. The rector's lawyer never went to court (if he had it would have been the same); and Millings obtained a judgment, with a bill of costs almost as large as the debt itself. It was the judgment record which Michael had been copying.

"You were saying '*but*,'" recommenced Millings, as he returned from the closet, brushing off the dust from his collar and coat, "'*but*;' which means, I suppose, that Flawler hasn't given up *all* the hard cases yet."

Michael gave a sigh, and went on with his writing from the rector's name for the seventieth time.

"Served him right," continued Millings; "he had no right to employ such a fellow as Cocklewiggs. Cocklewiggs never was right in his defenses, and never will be, if he lives until the City Hall is altered."

"When do we issue execution?" said Michael, putting forth another sigh, and dealing out the ink upon the polished paper before him with a vehemence of indignation.

"Right away, of course; there's nothing like following up against a man who hasn't got a bit of landed property. Stun him with a transcript of judgment right off.

say I, and take his pocket-book before he well wakes up."

"Cocklewiggs may move for stay of proceedings," interrupted Michael, folding up the papers, now complete.

Millings gave a whistle, appreciative of Mr. Cocklewiggs's audacity in thinking of such a movement, and proceeded to "do up" his quaint old desk for the night; while Michael groped behind the door for his overshoes, as the snow was now falling fast, and beating against the windows with an ugly and uncomfortable sound.

"And, when the judgment docket is complete, file it with the county clerk, and take the first train of cars, remember, with the transcript and the execution in your pocket, and, with some deputy, go and levy—that's the talk—levy," remarked Millings, as he struck out the last glimmer of fire in the grate with the battered office poker. "How he will stare, to be sure! And to-day's Friday. What a sermon there'll be on Sunday for his darling flock!"

And the two, carefully locking the doors, went slowly down the dark and narrow stairway into the bleak and stormy out-door air.

Trot the Sixth.



Trot the Sixth.

WHEN strong and new emotions suddenly besiege the heart, there have often been, nevertheless, insensible preparations by circumstances for a speedy surrender of the forces of hate and pride.

The channels in the heart of Robert Flawler had been, unknown to him, deepened by circumstances in prepa-

rations for the dissolving of their hitherto frozen currents.

He had never married. He had never loved — that people knew of. Why should he? He left his university with a burning desire for fame and wealth. Ambition, like the grim Cerberus that he is, stood at the door of his nature, and kept all other feelings and passions at bay. The wealth had come in abundance; the fame in moderation. He was known for a shrewd, painstaking lawyer; one who in years grew indispensable to certain families, whose bonds, and deeds, and wills, and accounts were snugly locked up in his iron chests, all duly labeled and endorsed; his opinion was quoted in gazettes upon knotty points of popular discussion. “Flawler thinks so,” determined many a merchant’s line of business.

His mother dying shortly after his entering upon the practice of law, left him with his only sister, Agnes. Before his books and worldly projects came to live with him, he had loved her with intense devotion. But by degrees he came less early to his home of an evening. He remained in office late. A hurried greeting took the place of the old kiss when he and Agnes met. Not that she was forgotten; she was but secondary in his thoughts. Thus left at home, in a large house, and timid of society, and with no companion for her solitary hours but the deaf housekeeper, it is small wonder that, when she met

Frederick Lynde one day at church, she forgot he was her brother's college enemy, and from him life-estranged, and learned in time to love him. He was often at the house, but little of this her lawyer-brother knew. And when Lynde persuaded her to marry him in secret, and to bring the knowledge of it to her brother only when the mischief was not to be repaired, and told her, in view of all his former love, that forgiveness was a thing of certainty, she had believed him in her girlish trust.

A week before the agonies of reminiscence and of remorseful reflection in the shadow-crowded room with the bawble and portrait before him, he had been summoned to the couch of death by an expiring client, Leonard Belter, to whose immense wealth his only child, a daughter, was the legal heir.

When he entered the darkened room, the victim of paralysis — shattered in body, but vigorous as ever in his mind—was sitting in his easy-chair, impatiently awaiting his lawyer's coming.

“Flawler, I'm glad you've come. I'm better now, and stronger than I've been this month—ever since this luckless visitation. I heard to-day that Ellis was noticed in the street, looking well and happy. The dog! He knows I'm sick, and already hears the rustle of my bank-notes.

I've not forgiven Clara for her marriage with him, as you know. I'll curse him with my dying breath."

"No—no; not curse, dear sir," interposed the lawyer, thinking in his heart of Ellis's manly face, and what a one for business he was.

The invalid turned his cold eye on Flawler with a shadow of a sneer upon his lip, and answered, "Yet, Flawler, you cursed your sister for the self-same thing, as gossip goes."

The lawyer started from his chair as if he was suddenly stung, and felt a tugging at his heart which did not leave him afterward for hours. The sweat struck to his brow—lightning gathered. He waved his hand apologetically, as it seemed to his client, who resumed. But no composure came for many minutes to the man whose nerves and self-possession had been, heretofore, a matter of proverb with his friends. The scene before him bade him think upon his mother's dying chamber and his oath; the old man's words referred him to its perjury; and he had stood in interference for a stranger recreant to his own hard-pledged, unfeeling ways.

"I've never signed my will, you know."

The lawyer slightly bowed.

"'Tis here," continued the tremulous invalid, with difficulty raising up a bundle of papers with the one arm where any vitality seemingly now remained, "and unal-

tered. She is disinherited in full as ever. I never signed it, because I left that for my last act, lest she should say, He made it in his strong passion, and would have altered it had strength permitted."

"Bad policy, dear sir," interposed Flawler, slightly recovering possession of his professional self; "a will executed under paralysis is sometimes matter for open attack."

"I'm sound of mind as ever; that *she* knows—that *you* know; and so I kept it until now. I've had strange feelings in my head to-day, and at my heart. The doctor says I'm getting well. He lies; I shortly die."

He tugged at the bundle of papers, and brought out the will, and smoothed the final page before him, while the lawyer rang the bell for witnesses. The butler and footman came in answer, and stood about the table expectingly, as though they were about to hear the whole story, and to know at once how liberal master was.

"You, Leonard Belter," said the lawyer, laying his finger on the outstretched will, "acknowledge and publish this document, to which you are about to sign your name in the presence of these two witnesses, to be your last will and testament?"

"I do," replied the old man, tremulously, grasping the outstretched pen the butler held, and tracing some cramped and crooked characters, that few of all his former asso-

ciates on 'Change would now have recognized to be his signature.

"And you do farther request these two persons to sign their names to this attestation as the witnesses thereof?"

"I do," added the paralytic; and the names were signed, after the lawyer had properly filled up the dates.

The door had scarcely closed upon the retreating footsteps of the servants when the old man's eye seemed caught by some unexpected words in the will before him. He glared at it horribly, and made a feint as if he would reach the writing. Robert Flawler caught it, to read what it could be that raised a stare so hideous to contemplate, and saw at once.

It was the old will—the first will, drawn up before her marriage, giving her every thing, which he had never, by some strange feeling, destroyed, and which, as drawn up and endorsed in the same clerkly hand, he had mistaken for the latest copy.

The lawyer raised his eyes from the paper writing to the face of his client, and drew his chair back in half afright to see the countenance that met his gaze. The eyes still glared—the pupils seemingly frozen in their sockets; but the jaw had fallen, and a blueness spread over the whole face.

Mr. Flawler sprang to the bell, and summoned help. It came, but the paralytic was dead; and the lawyer held

in his hand the will which gave the daughter, despite the father's curse, a princely heritage. There was the hand of Providence in that, be sure, Robert Flawler. A Providence which made the old man's curse as powerless as the imprisoned maniac's hate.

"I'll keep my own counsel," thought he, "to myself. They'll give *me* all the credit. The rents and family influence remain with my office yet;" and, laying the will down on the table, he left.

But, although these selfish, calculating thoughts came to his mind, they did not throng it as thickly as in former days they had filled his soul. Thoughts of the death—the Providence—the mysterious vengeance pressed on him too. The old man's eyes glared on him all the night, and he heard frequently repeated by an inward voice, "Yet, Flawler, you cursed your sister for the self-same thing."

Agnes!

The name was hissed into his ears. He read it on the back of every book which from the well-filled shelves frowned down upon him, and through every line of manuscript upon his table.

Agnes! Sister Agnes!

She came to him in dreams by night in all her joyous girlhood, and placed her hand so lily-white in his, and hung her auburn curls about his face, and pouted her

lips beside his own, and murmured "Brother!" in a low and plaintive voice.

Agnes! sister Agnes! grown to womanhood! She bent before him with those tearful eyes imploringly, while blushes dyed her cheek. She whispered of the past. She called a mother's blessing from beneath the velvet green-sward in the village church-yard. But all in vain; for Human Hate and Human Pride condemned his Human love to exile.

Agnes! Always, ever, since that old man's burning reproach—that miserly, vindictive fool, whom now the worms were rioting over, for all his velvet pall, and velvet trappings and silver nails about his massive coffin! Always sister Agnes!

Agnes! He could not shake her memory off. He carried her in his memory to the next day's office toil. He was thinking of her as a carriage stopped in front of the building where his office chambers were, and which he heard through all the dinning of the crowded streets about, and as a light figure stepped out of it and came up stairs. She was shown into the private chambers by the office clerk, young Michael Mount.

It was Clara Ellis, the legatee.

"Dear sir," exclaimed she, before the lawyer could well recover from his surprise, "I could not live another hour without bringing you the thanks of my overjoyed

heart for so comforting it amid its great affliction. It's not the wealth I'm thinking of—God knows it is not that; but that the last act of his life should be one of such overwhelming forgiveness is joy indeed. The butler told me all: how you were closeted with him, and how they were called in to witness this last act, the result of your good persuasions. I knew you ever had great influence with him. He told me with what a fevered, eager voice my father answered you that this was his last will, though we had found beside it another, one of later drawing up, so cruel in its language toward his only child—myself. And with what trembling hand he signed ;” and Mrs. Ellis, bursting into a flood of tears, seized the lawyer’s hand.

“Poor woman! I can not undeceive her,” thought Mr. Flawler; “we will let it be as it is.”

“And I see how Providence made you the means,” continued the weeping lady—“you, who knew so well how to feel for me—”

The lawyer moved uneasily on his chair, and put his hand toward his heart, where yet the swelling tide of something he could not define pressed for an outflow, as it had since yesterday.

“You, whose sister’s marriage, disobedient as mine, brought anger to your heart, and, it would seem, when death relieved her from her ills, forgiveness in its place, taught you how to feel for others in the like mistake.”

A groan, half stifled, escaped her hearer's lips, and his strong frame seemed racked with emotion.

"Forgive me, kind sir. I pain you too much, I see; I did not mean it. We will see you often now, I trust, our family friend;" and, saying so, she left, but took not away with her that which she brought—an added weight of reflective sorrow and anguished reminiscence to the lawyer's breast.

Through all the business of that day he worked like an automaton. For every one he had his clear, calm tone, but all could mark that something of care was on his mind.

"Poor fellow!" said many, as they saw him, "he works his mind to death."

As for John Millings, *he* had his doubts as to whether the "old un" was not going to retire, and leave the field all clear to him, that he might sign in yet larger flourish his accustomed name after "Your faithful (no more humble) servant." There was something uncommonly novel in the looks, and in the walk, and in the way of speech of his employer; and he would have sworn to seeing the print of tears—drops of seeming scalding water—upon a manuscript taken from the inner table. It was certainly very strange that the old will of Leonard Belter should have been the one presented for probate after all, and not the newer one that had been more carefully engrossed. Stranger, too, that the daughter who had run away with

“that dog Ellis,” as he was financially called, should come in person to see Flawler, and have such mystical conversations with him—she whom the lawyer had often denied himself to when coming to seek, through the aid of her father’s legal adviser, reconciliation with the obdurate parent.

These thoughts had been coursing his bosom all the morning of the day upon which first came to the office the shivering and thinly-clad woman who had brought to Flawler the long-hidden letter with his address (now so well known) upon it. Long and mysterious was the conference in the inner office. Vainly had John Milings gone to the door and tried it, in pretense of giving some forgotten message, that haply he might notice what was going on. Needlessly had he lingered near it in hopes to catch some sound of what was being said. There were low tones and smothered sounds, and that was all.

Even to Robert Flawler in his hours of business the time *had* come when all that pride and ambition suggested could not eat away the memory of his sister’s love. He felt it as he bowed his head upon his chair, before that stranger woman, and gave vent to tears of agony. Dismissing her with money, he had sought his home—had bethought him of the portrait once forgotten, and in his chair alone had passed a night of agony, which, when its morning broke, found him a man whose sincerity of grief his deeds should show.

Trot the Seventh.





Trot the Seventh.

“OH dear! there’ll be no more fares to-night, I’ll bet a sixpence; and only eight o’clock at that!”

“Coal and wood with roaring flames, and hot snacks with steaming punch, are the only tickets worth buying this blessed night; you can bet your life on that, and never lose a hair of your head, Bill Mount,” was the answer

to the first remark, at the end of a five minutes' conversation at the South Brooklyn ferry gate by Whitehall Slip between two omnibus drivers, upon the night in which we made the office acquaintance of John Millings and his legal helper, Michael Mount.

The drivers were crouching by the side of their stages, while the wind went howling past, tearing from Butter-milk Channel over the ferry-house top, to whistle wildly in the Battery trees beyond, and then to wander through the city streets for miles away, making havoc with the sign-boards, and the awning-posts, and window-blinds, and flaring all the street lights from corner to corner. The waves were dashing loudly in the slips, and around the piers about; and the lights of the anchored vessels in the bay danced to and fro, as rose and fell their hulls and rigging with the mounting white-capped waves. The ferry-boats had laid up early for the night, and all the men around the ferry-house had gone, except one growling Cerberus of a fellow, fit for such a night of elemental strife, who remained behind to tell a straggling passenger, if any such there was, to take the up-town ferry, where the tide was less, and where the wind obtained less scope of play. The snow came flying down and whirling over the ground. The omnibus horses shook their heads impatiently, and made strong feints of starting from their posts, so eager were they for their warm beds in the

long stables far up town, and the manger full of bran and oats.

"There'll be good running, Bob, to-morrow, if it keeps on this way; sleds—snow—four horses, you know," said Mr. William Mount, as he prepared to ascend his box-seat, and so toil with his horses onward. Pressing his oilskin hat tightly upon his forehead, and putting up the collar of his overcoat, he drew forth a pair of gigantically-proportioned gloves, and assumed the reins. With a hearty good-night to his companion, and an encouraging "chirrup" to his team, he started through the now deserted and almost lampless Whitehall Street. It was hard going, and the horses knew it, for they bent their heads toward the snowballed pavement, and blew the top flakes in flurries before them.

"I'm two shillings short of usual rainy-day fares, and not a passenger is out, I'm certain—least ways can I see him, if there was. It's nice business, omnibusing is—in summer time! but when you see old Niblo's stop, it gets to be worse than gold-digging."

This was the commencement of a long soliloquy of driver Bill in passing Bowling Green, as, leaving the horses nearly to their own toiling through the driving snow, he sat upon his box.

It is a queer race, the race of drivers for the 'busses, and a life they lead but little known and little thought

about. Your driver sits upon his box a very monarch of all the fares he surveys. High is he above the heads of all the crowd—a monarch in his way upon a throne. At his nod millionaires come, and to his beck the proudest beauty bows. The best of us he closes up within his box “for twelve,” and holds us there securely with his foot. The howling wind may blow, the driving snow may drift, the burning sunbeams may fall, the pelting rain may beat upon him, and the insidious drizzle chill the marrow in his bones ; yet, unprotected from them all, this monarch, potent though he be, drives up and down from sunrise to the midnight hour, the servant of the meanest individual so fortunate as to have a sixpence !

The passenger world regard him as an automaton—a figure to guide the horses, answer becks and nods, and take the money it bestows—a mere machine to grumble at when working slowly or illy.

This monarch, this automaton, was driver Bill, soliloquizing on his box, and toiling through the snow. William Mount, Esq. (as he wrote himself on Sundays and election-days, when he had his brass-button coat upon him, and his shining hat), was very fond of soliloquy. He had a sorry opinion of human nature, and he knew he was as honest as honest could be ; he had tried himself for many a day, and never found his heart to linger about a wrong spot. He had a sorry opinion of human

nature, I say, and oftener preferred to talk to himself than to any one he didn't know. In this case he had no choice, and so kept on.

"Here's this pile of bricks, where Johnson Cruger, as drives for Worrell, lost his bay mare. She was, indeed, a beauty. Many's the corner fare I've lost in looking at her as she passed, and never—"

Mr. Mount's condolences over the dead beauty were here suddenly cut short by a loud shout. He pulled shortly up, and looked around. He was at the Park, and by the middle gate made out a figure waving an umbrella.

"Do you turn down Canal Street?" said the figure.

"Here you are—all right, sir," answered Mount, as the man came trudging up to the omnibus, and got in.

"It'll be only eighteen-pence short," said Bill, urging on his horses to the fresh start; "and, since business is stirring, who knows but the average 'll come out right after all?"

It was Robert Flawler, who, since he left the office early in the afternoon, had been to search out from the address the woman who visited him in his office and at the house. He was feverish to gain, perhaps, some more of information on the matter that now lay dearest to his soul. Besides, he had been too neglectful of her and her family. Money she declined; but might he not, in other

ways, reward her for that which, by the battle in his breast, he knew was preparing the path for happier days and more contented ways?

And he had found her, with all her wretched penury pressing around her—her husband a discharged and wounded soldier, who gained a scanty pittance as sub-hofter in the stage-stables far up town—her children thin and haggard, with all their pride of youth and roseate hopes of life tied with remorseless and crushing power to the Juggernaut of poverty, that, even in this bountiful land of Western promise, wears out the life of thousands every hour.

He felt the visit had done him good. His heart was lighter for the plans to their relief; and, better still to suit his thus far wholly selfish nature of life, there were new proofs to aid the letter and the coral bawble—new and more precious proofs, which there he found—an infant's dress, soiled with the soil of years, and with its tissues thin and yielding somewhat to the touch, but still (he felt it in his soul by such magnetic presentiments which come to all of us in life) *his sister's handiwork!*

Escaping to the storm-bound street, he pressed it to his lips with frantic eagerness. Mayhap the spirit of Leonard Belter in the driving sleet about was looking on—ay, looking on, to see how changed that man had been since in his ears were hissed from out the miser's unfor-

giving lips, "And yet the world says, Flawler, you cursed your sister for the self-same thing."

His sister's handiwork! Dead though her child might be—dead though for these unpitying years gone by his heart to her had been—yet now her portrait and her handiwork could bid awaken in all their youthful value the memories of companionship sweeter than which the world could never know.

He had omitted to take a carriage as he went upon his errand, and now, with the driving snow clogging the streets, all vehicles but a few stages had hastened to their stable refuges.

He struck across a few streets, and, reaching the Park, hailed the first stage which came toiling by.

Seated in the stage alone, he gave way again and again to the new emotions in his breast, until, looking up, he saw that Canal Street was gained. Pulling the check, he said,

"Driver, I'm your only fare."

"True for you there, mister," answered Bill, through the little cupola; "and sorry for that I'd be if it wasn't for the horses this bad night."

"If you'll turn down the street and up the Laight Street corner for a block I'll give you half a dollar."

"Eight passengers, by jocks!" said Bill, reining his horses by the turn, and ruminating for a minute. "It

will make my average come out right, and pay the horses for the feed. Who can he be? Queer cove!"

"Come, driver, will you go?" repeated the inside passenger.

"Ay, ay, it's a bargain," and the horses were urged about the corner.

A few blocks passed, the check-string was pulled with violence, and the stranger, as the omnibus stopped, thrust up his coin, and, springing out, was lost in the driving snow.

Bill Mount, retracing his unexpected route, again amused himself with soliloquy.

"First time, this, I ever turned hackney-coachman. Rum cove, that! Wonder if his coin's a counterfeit? It feels heavy. Woa! woah!"

And he pulled up for a moment by a flickering gas-burner to examine it.

"Blowed if it arn't a double eagle! Is he rich or careless?" continued he, driving onward.

"It's my experience that them chaps who rides with us and never stops for the change of their tenpences are always poor fellows trying for a show. Rich 'uns hands us up fivepences to cheat us of a cent.

"Rum covey, that! but it's useless to foller him and leave my horses too. We'll ask Molly about it, or Mike, or Brother Ben—my brother on police—or Bob, who'll

put it in the paper, maybe, that he works for every day; for if I gives it to Pete Wagner, the starter, he'll be after keeping it snug."

Thus soliloquizing, and much more, he braced himself in his seat and slowly toiled toward home.

Scarcely had Robert Flawler gained his library door, with the ever-present and inquisitive Daniels at his heels, when, yielding his overcoat to the butler, he bade him hand the package from its pocket.

Daniels shook the garment of its snow, and felt in all the pockets. "Nothing here, sir."

"Nothing! Look again; look on the floor; look on the steps outside, and in the street. It can't, it must not be lost," cried his master, with strange volubility, and himself feeling in the coat and hastening to the door.

Daniels stood confounded.

"Or in the stage! run after him; I may have left it in the stage. He brought me to the corner."

Daniels seized his hat and scampered to the street, burying his favorite leg at the first plunge into a snow-drift.

"Ugh! it's a cruel night! I wonder where he's been? Stage, too! There's no stage hereabouts. He's mad! master's clearly mad! I don't believe he's lost any thing."

Having shivered out thus much, Mr. Daniels, the discreet and cautious butler that he was, stood by the corner.

"It's onpossible—a fool's errand—I won't go."

So, rubbing his leg, he stood for a few minutes, shivering worse and worse, to let time pass before he returned. After their expiration, he walked back to the house, and ran up the stoop and through the entry into his master's eager presence, puffing and blowing as if he had run down twenty trotters in harness.

"Please, sir, there's not an omnibus in sight."

"The rascal has driven off for fear I missed the double eagle that I find I must have given him. He shall have double that if he restore the package."

Daniels left the room, and hastened to the cabinet below.

"I told you, last night, that master was clean gone for it, and I'm stronger of the opinion to-night. I almost feel as if it was my duty to report him to the mayor; there's no knowing what he may do next," said our old friend Daniels, as, seated very closely to the kitchen range, he was nursing his leg in gentlemanly indignation, while cook and maid were at one side—the one turning, from time to time, the part of a roasted fowl for warming through, and the other mulling some port wine.

It was very evident, from the preparations, that Mr. Daniels stood in peculiar need of refreshments from some cause or another, and that the kitchen cabinet were exerting themselves to their best endeavor to appease his wrath.

“Ten blessed blocks did I run after the omnibus, through the driving snow, and four times slipping down. It’s my opinion there never was an omnibus to-night at all, and never a package left in it, except as figured out in master’s disordered brain.”

“Then you couldn’t even see it?” said the housemaid, pausing for a moment as she stirred.

“You couldn’t see a comet to-night if it hung on St. John’s steeple, there’s such a snow-storm out,” returned the butler.

“There’s one thing in it good—”

“Ha!” exclaimed Daniels, putting down his leg, and taking up the other, “what can be good?”

“Good in it this way—your run has made you hungry,” said the cook, only slightly disconcerted at her associate’s vehemence; and, serving up the fowl, now quite warmed through, upon a dish, invited the panting butler to his nightly supper.



Trot the Eighth.



Trot the Eighth.

WE have for some time quitted Old Whitey and his attendant servants. We have for some time left simple Simon Lobb and the loving Alice Sparkler within the small, but neat and cozy barn, ministering to the wants of the old campaigner. We have for some time parted from his stall, wherein he stood so complacently happy—be

sure he did just that!—munching his morning meal, and winking and blinking with his large black eyes eternal gratitude at the small blue orbs which look so admiringly upon him, and shaking innumerable caresses from his mane, and stamping full applause with his hard shoes at the whole proceeding upon the tightly-knit timbers of his stable chamber, and quivering his white skin as if he delighted in the affectation that he was cold that frosty morning—he, Old Whitey, cold!—with the shining straw around, and the warm hay above, that seemed to keep within its bunches some bits of the fervid July sunshine under which the haymakers had melted as they tossed it to and fro, or raked it into graceful stacks.

We had stepped outside that cozy barn, with the free and easy manners of author and readers, to look at other matters; but it surely was a sad omission to pass by the scene without from the rectory grounds. They slope from a fine elevation, that gives foundation to the ample mansion which rises from it, down toward the noble river, now a lake of pure unbroken white, except a narrow and winding line in its centre, where huge paddle-wheels and iron-bound bows have broken in, with their travel, on its symmetry of wintry beauty. We look upon the river through the boughs of venerable trees, whose sap is sleeping snugly under the leaves it nourished all the summer through, and along little lanes and paths, still seen

in their winding shape and hollows underneath the snow, and through a ravine, where sleep, till spring-time awakens their music, three or four cascades, the triumph of the landscapes all around. Before the house sweeps down a lawn unto the little road, from which rises another hill, whose top is lined with pine-trees and hemlocks, that now are bending imploringly under the weight of the snow the last night's storm left on their branches.

He was but a sorry traveler on the river who had not heard of the rectory at Millward Grove, and, as he went sweating by in steam-boat, kept in his dreamy fancy what possible paradise might be there existing. The paradise was there, but very modest in pretensions; very exclusive too, perhaps, as all paradises must be, as religion goes nowadays.

The Reverend Matthew Sparkler and his only child—his daughter Alice—had lived in it these fifteen years. To her he had been the mother as well as father; for the parent whose holy mission it is in life to mould the soul of youthful offspring, had died before the infant prattle had lost its first mysterious and sweet uncertainty of language, and its early music to the ear that was the first to hear its tiny, trembling sound. The rector's wife had had a brother, and the two were orphans. Death was the portion of their family, so it seemed, and some misfortune as well. The brother had sought a Western home, and found a Western grave.

A good man was the rector: good in feelings and in acts; good to the neighbor; good to his charge; good in his example; good to his daughter, who became from early childhood his almost hourly companion.

I like that Saxon word—that glorious “good!” It needs no definition; it asks no search for derivation; it wishes no illustration; it lacks not for example even in this naughty world of ours. It carries its own meaning with it and its own expressiveness into whatever part of the world of language it journeys. And when I say, then, that the rector of the little village church of Millward Grove was known for far and near as the “good rector”—even with the little coterie of backbiting spirits who sometimes met in the little back parlor of the Widow Nichols at the railway station hard by—I have summed up his character in a word, and said as much to let us all know him as if I had analyzed his character quality by quality.

The good rector had the good daughter, and beautiful as she was good, illustrating in every way the old Saxon proverb each of us knows so well by heart. Just turned of seventeen. Her clear, transparent face, with features not more moulded into beauty by Nature’s hand than radiated with the glow of health which only Nature’s breath can give. Her lustrous eyes of azure hue not more asking from the gazer into their depths the instant

need of homage, than acquainting him with the wealth of mind and purity of heart of which those eyes were the sentinels to the outer world. Her clustering hair about her shoulders flung, not more reminding of the girlhood being left behind, than suggesting how the maidenhood, just in its flush, would suffer by the confinement of those locks in braids, however classic. Her form and movements not more displaying native grace not ruined yet by art, than did her voice and musical laugh reveal that the great world beyond the rectory grounds had never sent its messengers to train her accents in the ways of affectation.

The rector's little college fortune of a few thousand dollars had been spent in fitting up the choicest little library in the country round about, and in beautifying house and grounds (and these of title not his own), until now he found he had but a slender clerical income for support. And all for daughter Alice, who herself had come to love the little place and all about it as they were essentials of her life. And in roaming with her about the little grounds, or busy with her by his side in the well-stocked library, he often had to think how thoughtless he had been in not retaining some of those few thousands for *her*, and at what possible cost to her future their present comfort and happiness had been purchased.

As the sun came climbing over the mountains all about,

there came a pleasant flow of his light upon the portico. The hall door opens, and out comes the rector, his black silk skull-cap still upon his head, and his warm and ample gown wrapped about him. He has come to call his daughter to the meal now served up in the library. He loves to eat with all his books about him, and feels as if he was eating in honorable company when favorite authors are gathered by his side. But Alice has quitted the barn-yard, and, running lightly through the snow, is in the portico, and given the father such a kiss as may have reached the Old Whitey, and made him jealous in his stall.

"I've been to see the old fellow at his meal. I always eat my breakfast better when I've seen him fed," said Alice.

"He is a gormandizer, is Old Whitey," returned her father, taking her hand, and going in, "not only in the way of feed, but of your time. I think we must part with Old Whitey, as things go."

"Part with Old Whitey!" repeated Alice, laughing merrily.

This was a favorite joke of theirs; and when the father wished to make a jealous threat in badinage, he always used that phrase. Even the horse himself had learned, seemingly, to know it, and would laugh in a sarcastic neigh, as if to say, "I dare you to, even if you mean it."

They had reached the breakfast-table, and Alice sat beside the steaming urn, which Mrs. Lobb (the housekeeper, and Simon's mother, who had been the little Alice's nurse, when her own mamma left her in her budding infancy) had placed upon the table when she went out for more toast.

"It's a beautiful morning, and we will remember it in our Grace," said the father, as they bent their heads.

"A beautiful morning indeed, father, and just the day to go to town in the noon train to buy our Christmas tree for the Sunday-scholars. Next week's the time, you know, and without their tree they could not pass a merry time."

"Always thinking of others' happiness, my dear; and I will add, to buy something also for my pet."

"What, Old Whitey? Let's get him a new halter, with a bright silver buckle."

"That is your pet, Alice; it's for *my* pet that I speak—your own dear self. You know that I've disowned Old Whitey, and that I'm going to part with him."

And again the sly smile of the rector and the hearty laugh of Alice were seen and heard at the good old famous joke.

"But we'll get the new halter, and the buckle too. Your plan is well thought of, for it's about time my troublesome matter of the note in suit should be com-

ing on. Quilmer was to write me; but he may forget it."

"I wish, papa, you had not gone to him. He is an odious old snuffy fellow, and he has got an evil eye. You remember that day he came up here, and ate so many grapes, and made such fun of Old Whitey, and quizzed poor Simon about his speed?"

It was very evident that if Mr. Quilmer, the lawyer (and whom our facetious friend Millings, as we have seen before, termed Cocklewiggs, in opprobrious nickname), had been an angel, and had thus uttered aught against Old Whitey, he would have been in her mind but a sorry fallen one.

"I had an ugly dream about the note," said the father, not heeding the reproaches addressed to his lawyer, and stirring his coffee abstractedly, "and yet Quilmer is so positive I shall not have to pay it. The publisher has got the books and plates, and I suppose the paper and old lead would pay him for his note. Yes, Alice, we will go to town, and see about our lawsuit, and the Christmas presents, and all."

"After breakfast I must go and tell Old Whitey all about it, and Simon shall give us a sleigh-ride to the dépôt." So saying, Alice bounded out of the room.

"My darling one! Heaven grant no mishap may befall her or myself!" and the rector's eyes here brimmed

with tears. "My dream was but a phantasy of the brain, and yet it presses on my spirits. No, no! Flawler never could so injure his old college friend."

And Matthew Sparkler mused a moment.

"And yet poor Frederick was a college friend as well as I; and he and Flawler's sister perished dreadfully through the bitter chance of his neglect that drove them to those Western wilds. Shall I see him? So far that I know, he has no notion of my existence except through this suit. Perhaps he does not know of it. But that is foolish, for it's from his own office, and his own signature was to the writ. But let this go when worst shall come."

And the good rector, with a heavy heart, went to his little room to prepare for his brief metropolitan visit.

H



Trot the Ninth.





Trot the Ninth.

The little stove was red hot! red hot, and growing redder every minute, was the little stove in honest William Mount's little kitchen. And the little kettle of bean soup that stood on its top-lid was boiling away for dear life, sending a delicious whiff of savory odor through the room, and through the crevice of the pantry door, and

into the little entry, and up into the room of the second-story lodger, who was a clerk in the hardware line, and capable of appreciating any stove which could send such an odor forth ; for all the stoves *he* saw and felt each day were as shining and as cold as the exterior of a man of fashion on the promenade. It gave a glow to every thing about, and the pipe cracked for joy half way up to its chimney lodging. The red in the rag-carpet on the floor assumed a warmer look ; the chrome yellow on the wall looked less cheerless in the ruddy light ; and the church steeple, on the painted pane of glass, which hid the bottom of the pendulum in the mantel clock, looked as if it was reflecting the last rays of a harvest sunset. The old soldier returning from Moscow, in the little engraving in the black frame that hung against the pantry door, seemed to put on the air of a conquering general, amid the general desolation of ink about his legs that marked the course of the driving snow.

The red stove gave a glow to the always ruddy face of Mrs. Mount, as she sat a respectful distance from the jolly piece of iron, and mended a pair of stockings. Every now and then she would look at the clock and at the door. It was over half an hour ago that she had set out the table by her side, with its blue crockery-ware on the snow-white cloth—5 plates, 5 cups and saucers, with a meat-dish in reserve—and still the out-door workers tar-

ried. Who were they? and for whom were prepared the plates, the cups and saucers upon that white cloth, that it made the passer-by hungry to look at, as he glanced through the little curtained opening in the window-pane?

Mrs. Mount was one. Perhaps I might be justified in saying she was equal to the four, and was therefore more than one herself. Toiling and moiling all the day was that good housewife—her own maid, and cook, and laundress, and seamstress, all combined—never shaming the sun, in the early morning, by her devotion to the bed; always cheerful; and imparting to the others, in their most wearisome moods, a pleasant feeling of contentment.

There was “Bill,” her husband, whom we have come to know before, and who was just now, as the stove kept growing redder and redder for his return, putting away his jaded horses for the night.

There was Michael, whom this story hath also come to know in his legal novitiate, and who now, leaving the well-filled library of the Institute (that contained the books which, to his mind, were better far than law volumes in dusky calf), had under his arm, protected by his coat from the storm, a brace of novels for his evening diversion.

There was Uncle Ben—Mrs. Mount’s brother—who made the place his home whenever off of duty. If you had seen him, jolly bachelor policeman that he was, in

his tightly-fitting coat of blue, with the shining buttons of the Manhattan arms in imposing column on the straight lapel, or with his jaunty cap of the same color, in the best regulation, cut over his good-humored face, it is ten to one you would have singled him out as a commodore, at least, on leave of absence, industriously engaged in riding all the metropolitan elephants which are to be found from Castle Garden to High Bridge. The station-house was not far off, and there he had a bed, and a peg or two for cap, and coat, and club, or any little aid of dress for foul and stormy weather that he chose to keep. But at home in house of Brother Bill was always Brother Ben—at meal times. Eating and drinking would have been small business to him if done at other places, and away from the coziness that reigned in the little kitchen over which, just now, the stove was lord and master, or away from the fun and gossip of little Willie whenever the great printing-presses let him off from work.

Brother Ben and Uncle Ben was in the house that very minute. Yonder chair beside the stove held his cap and club, and he himself had been up stairs an hour or more taking “a bit of nap.” Good service all day long had brought to him a few hours’ leave of absence, which, under the damps and colds he had gone through to-day, was best filled by sleep.

And not far off from the cap and club, quite hidden by the stove-pipe, so generously large was it, sat Willie, busy with a newspaper. Coming to the stove a little nearer, and as the paper fell for the first time, could you see that he was hump-backed, and that his finely-chiseled face and curly-haired head was pivoted upon misshapen shoulders. He was very short in stature, and, for the moment, looked the schoolboy of nine years old. But his face was old; and from his eyes there beamed intelligence which some men you and I know would have been glad to find on their own faces as they shaved o' mornings. Little Willie he was called, and known as such the neighborhood through. But dwarf-boy that he was, his mind was manly enough, and Michael, and all at home well knew it too. In all the trials his honest parents had been through—and "Bill" would smoke his pipe with quicker puff whenever he thought of them, as if to drive them away the quicker in the whirls and curls of smoke—little Willie, in his youth, had been protected from the storms of care with solicitude, as if a favorite plant, in autumn's sere and yellow leaf, had summoned forth a gardener's greatest watchfulness. But he had found the years that should have given him stature among men endowing him with strength and health. For a year or more now past he had found employment on the presses of a newspaper establishment down town,

filling out his own wishes for industrious support, and well aiding the economy of the old folks at home.

And humble as that home was to all the outward look and inward show, if you can point out to me a happier home than *they* had, all New York island over, I'll forfeit all your good opinion forever. They thought of it enough, but it was far away up town; and all the city had not climbed up to it yet, though it was striding handsomely along with its brown stone fronts, and iron balconies, and frescoed rooms, covering ground where some boys, not yet men, had come to steal their cherries of a holiday afternoon.

Nine o'clock had come, and not yet Michael or the father. The cuckoo clock had struck the hour loud enough, as if he intended both to hear his warning in the windy streets, and so hurry along the faster. It had caused Willie to drop the evening paper that he had printed himself, and folded too, all damp with gossip as it was, into his pocket. It had made Mrs. Mount to rise for a moment, and, going to the window, put back the curtain to see how the storm kept up. It had awakened Uncle Ben, who now came clattering down the stairs, and, opening the door, gaped—gaped a refreshing gape; widening his mouth as if it were to be, when closed, the tomb of all fatigue, past, present, and to come; stretching his cheeks as if to bid defiance to

all the members of the potent family of Momus; a gape which sounded as if it were anathematizing all the powers of wakefulness; a gape which hinted of a good-sized slumber broken into halves, and destined never again to be compactly united.

“Goodness! Brother Ben, why how you fright a body!” cried the stocking-knitter, looking over her shoulder at the gaper. “The storm is nothing to your voice.”

“Say rather, mother, that the clatter of a Hoe press is a grasshopper’s chirrup to that gape of Uncle Ben’s.”

“I guess you’d gape, too, if driven to cat-naps as I am.”

Here there was another terrific gap made in the conversation, and a responsive wail of wind came down the chimney, tingling the stove-pipe as if it were a weather sounding-board.

“I been on beat all day—snow in Broadway up to your knees—gutters choked—every thing wet—w-e-u-g-h-yo—o—ah!”

It was very evident that Simon Lobb and Brother Ben must have belonged to the same family. Never were such expressive gapes as it is the duty of this chronicle so far to particularize.

“Bill ought to be home early to-night,” quoth Mr. Mount, looking again at the window.

“And Michael too,” added Willie, “for the reading-room is cheerless enough to-night.”

Uncle Ben had brushed his cap and club upon the table, and, taking the chair, was about to gape over the evening paper, when the alley gate was heard to open.

"And so they are," says Willie. "Hark! two voices—both of them together."

"And with their soup-tickets all ready, I dare say," interposed the policeman, thinking, as he glanced at the stove, of the meal he so much craved, and of the hundreds he had seen that morning at the station-house bringing their tickets for the warm breakfast.

Away went the stockings; and flying to the fire, Mrs. Mount gave a turn to the kettle of soup on the stove, which, knocking off the lid with a chuckle on the hearth-stone, sent forth its whole power of savor into the nostrils of the tardy comers as their rosy and good-humored faces entered in the door.

The latter opened for a moment, but was quickly shut; but quickly as that was, the storm-fiend out had heard the kisses and the greetings made within, and he howled and rattled around the house and down the chimneys with prodigious strength.

"I met him at the corner, mother," said Michael, nodding to his father as he helped him to pull his oil-skins off; "and how I frightened him! Oh dear, it was as good as a farce."

As the good-humored, laughing boy stood by the side

of the bluff driver, it was a striking contrast to see him. His face was finely chiseled, and his forehead betokened the strength of perceptive faculties. His chestnut hair curled in profusion about a large head. There was a look of nobleness in the eye which won you. The critical observer might have well wondered at the freak of nature which gave to father and mother, lowly circumstanced and somewhat illiterate as they were, a son of such aristocratic mien.

William Mount (throwing his boots into a corner, and nodding at Brother Ben). Call it farce, if you please; but I was frightened for the minit. I thought he was an officer, like Brother Ben there, and I was gone.

Mrs. Mount (changing countenance, and standing with ladle in hand). An officer! Why, Bill, why should *you* fear one, and Brother Ben there one of 'em.

Uncle Ben (settling his stock with dignity). I flatter myself that, if it was necessary to arrest *any* one, I'd do my duty.

Willie (laughing merrily). A sort of Brutus, Uncle Ben; him, you know, as Michael read about the other night in the Roman history.

Michael (roaring heartily, and slapping Ben on the back). You'll be called on, Uncle Ben, never you fear; so get ready for the Sessions at once.

Uncle Ben. You don't mean your father has been beating the drum-stick ostler as he said—

Mount. Never fear that. I bears him no ill will. And he's an honest fellow in the main, and poor. He's poorer than we.

Michael. Do you say poor *now*, after—

Mount. The officer, as I said—

This dialogue went briskly on as the soup was being dished; and now, as all are seated about the table, steadily engaged in supper, it still goes on.

“Yes, an officer. And ain't I rich, though, Molly?” continued her husband, bent on having his joke out now it was begun, and laying on the table before her the coin received from the stranger in his omnibus.

Mrs. Mount's look of alarm was no way lessened by the display of gold, and still she looked her inquiries, while Michael burst into a laugh.

“You see, mother, this is the way it is. Father took it, by mistake, from a man for a quarter; and the man wouldn't come, though he was called, and I'm to find him out to-morrow.”

“Not only that, Molly,” continued her husband, chuckling still; “when I was putting up the horses and the 'bus, I goes inside to blow the lantern out, and here I finds this parcel on the seat”—and, pulling it from his pocket, it was laid upon the table—“and while I walked along, thinking whether or no I shouldn't go down town again, and advertise for him, and as to how that I should

find him, this Michael here, for all the world like a deputy sheriff—”

Here Michael roared again, and Willie took up the chorus of his mirth.

“Like a deputy sheriff, clapped me on the shoulder, and for the minute I thought they suspected bad of me.”

Mrs. Mount had taken up the parcel, and was examining it. No mark—no trace of whose it was.

“It’s well you didn’t go back,” said she; “the newspapers are all shut up.”

“Shut up, indeed!” echoed Michael; “why, mother dear, when you, and I, and Willie here, and father there, and all the world besides, are snoring in their beds, if you will walk down town about the offices, you’ll find them at it all night long: the steam a puffing—wheels a whirring—press a clattering—men a winking over the gas-lights—and the shadows of quickly-moving arms will fall outside like so many spectre fists shaking at the ugly night breeze! A newspaper shut up at night, indeed! If there’s a murder now a going on in Charleston, weary miles away, before two hours are gone the telegraph has sped it on, and men are ready to put it up in type for other men, who slept the whole thing through, to read at breakfast-time. If there’s a noble ship now breaking up this wintry night upon the bar at Sandy Hook, the newspapers will learn it all, and spread the news at breakfast-

time before the owner's eyes, while yet the bodies of the shipwrecked men are being warmed and rolled in hopes to give them life!"

"Why, how the boy can talk!" exclaimed the worthy matron, laying down her bread-knife in admiration of the enthusiast, while Willie looked his pride up in the speaker's face, and the elder Mount, nodding to himself, soliloquized, "He'll do—he'll do!"

"But how to know what's what?" asked Mrs. Mount, again taking up the package.

"How says the law?" added Mount, chuckling at Michael. "Here's a case for advice at home, and an extra spoonful of soup for your fee."

"Open it, mother; there'll be a clew inside."

And it was opened.

But no sooner so, than Mrs. Mount, whose eye was first upon the contents, started from her seat with hasty surprise, and closed it up again.

She left the table, too, and beckoning her husband in the corner, showed it to him there. He clutched it tightly, rolled it up, and placed it in the breast-pocket of his coat.

Crot the Centh.





Trot the Tenth.

It was well for the relatives of Policeman Ben, as they indulged in his presence with these suspicious vagaries, that the Brutus eyes of that model M.P. were wholly absorbed in the soup, and contemplating its savory steam or the diameter of his spoon; otherwise, just to keep his hand in, there might have been an arrest then and there

for receiving stolen property, or some other kindred crime.

The movements were so hasty, and the parcel disappeared so quickly, that neither of the sons cared to see what became of it, and the two resumed their seats; but by the changing countenance of the one and the perplexed face of the other, it was plain to observe that something of more than ordinary mystery had then been unfolded. But in a few moments they recovered their equanimity.

The soup was good; they all pronounced it good; and while the appetites about were as good in turn, the supper was not long to last.

"The ill wind blows somebody good," said the elder Mount, as, leaning back, he expanded his waistcoat by the aid of unloosening a button; "blows somebody good," repeated he, as if soliloquizing, "as Willie, here, says from his play-book on the shelf."

" "'Tis an ill wind,' and so forth," interrupted Willie, laughingly. "You've got the sense, though, father dear, and that's enough."

"I ought to, for I takes enough of cents the whole day through," said the father, roaring at his joke, while all the rest joined in with hearty chorus.

"And why I says so, Molly," turning to his wife, "is, that this storm to-day gives us a long evening together.

But I've better news than that. Sam Whippley is in town, and agrees to drive for me on Christmas day."

"On Christmas day!" exclaimed they all.

"Oh, what a dinner there will be!" said Molly. "Last year you could not come till late, and all the duck was spoiled."

"Ducks!" echoed Bill; "ducks indeed! We'll make it pigeons, Molly dear, this time, and lots of stewed cranberry and cold soaked peas for the relish."

"And maybe the cap'in will let me off for the day," struck in Uncle Ben. "The Boys ain't as wicious Christmas as they are New Year's; the day seems more for quiet fun than rows, and so there'll be less duty."

"A week ahead to think of it," said Michael. "And Crocker, the wine-client of the office, owes me a bottle of Madeira for a long paper I copied for him long before last summer. I'll venture to remind him of it now it's Christmas time."

"Pigeons and Madeira," repeated Willie; "and perhaps a Christmas story from the English bookseller's."

"I'll get some winter apples, too," said Michael, "for I'm going in the country to-morrow for a day."

"Business—what?" asked the father, who now had got his pipe to work, and spoke as shortly as possible.

"The minister who's in the trouble I have often spoke about. He's lost his suit; and I'm to see him and the sheriff in the morning at his place."

"Nothing in the criminal line, eh, Mike?" interrupted the smoking M.P. (now busy with a pipe); "nothing I can do for you?"

"No, it's civil, Uncle Ben."

"Civil—oho! oh, all law is mighty civil, that's a fact," added Uncle Ben, with a hearty laugh, in which the others joined.

"Law, law, law—a beautiful thing is law!" said the father, as if in soliloquy. Then tapping his pipe to knock out the ashes, he burst forth with a verse of the old song, Willie looking quizzically into Michael's face the while, and honest Mrs. Mount bringing the glow of admiration into her face at the vocal powers of her husband, to whom, in her estimation, Jenny Lind was but a sorry singer:

"If life's all sugar and honey,
And fortune's always been sunny,
And you want to get rid of your money,
I'll advise you to go to law!
Like ice in a rapid thaw,
Your cash will melt awa';
Comfort 'tis folly to care for,
Life's a lottery, therefore,
Without a why or a wherefore,
I'll advise you to go to law;
For L—A—W, law,
Does, like a blister, draw.

"Yes, I advise all to go to law, especially as we're to have a judge in the family," said the singer, after he had drawn a long breath, and prepared to refill his pipe.

"Sometimes I wish I were out of it—though, for that matter, I'm not very deep as yet—and had taken to physic," said Michael, looking very pompously at the stove, which was now getting rather under the weather, and looked as if it was going to retire for the night, and put on the huge kettle for a cold night-cap.

"Law and physic, Nephew Mike," interposed Uncle Ben, with a show of dignity, "are pretty generally the same thing to most people."

Willie, who had been anxiously rumpling a great many bits of paper in his hand, something abstracted from the homely household fun, looked up, and laughing, said,

"Why, you're improving, Uncle Ben. I'll have to write a book to put you in, at this rate!"

The M.P. fingered his pipe complacently, and said he was down in the books as it was—and down a "many times too.

"But not in Willie's book. And if Willie should write a book about you, Uncle Ben, oh! how that book would sell," cried Mrs. Mount, bustling about in clearing up the table, and sparkling her honest eyes alternately at brother, husband, and boys.

"Yes, it would be a sell," cried out the pertinacious

Uncle Ben, who was called Joe Miller at the station-house, and bore his honors well.

"But, talking of books," cried Michael, waving his hand to the M.P., as if to deprecate his farther vengeance of words, "Willie, there, has got a book already. Don't you see it in his hands?"

The young printer was red with blushes. "Not a book, Brother Mike; a—little—little thing."

"A story! I'm wide awake. Hand me that pipe. Let's have the story. It's your night off, Ben. The wind blows hard; the stove is cozy; lay away the paper; let's have Willie's story," cries the father, settling himself in his chair as if upon the box for a long drive.

"And after that a brace of mine, if you will," adds Michael. "I write stories too."

"Comes natural-like — you're a lawyer, Mike, you are!" added the merciless M.P., as rounds of laughter go around, and Willie fidgets nervously withal upon his chair.

"No, only one, and not a brace. Let's have our Willie's tale," said William Mount.

"Willie's the writer, you're the lawyer, Mike—be fair," adds the mother, taking up her knitting, and bending forward to kiss the deformed darling of the homely household.

WILLIE'S STORY.

THE MAGIC SLEIGH-RIDE.

WHAT person, having heard of the old town of Pompunack, will dispute us when we assert that to rank A No. 1 among its burghers was no easy or common matter? This, however, was the rank of Hans Von Rittersnacks—the mentor of all who felt what a magnificent blessing it was to have in acquaintance, ay, and in fellowship too, one whose master mind could direct every movement and accomplish every design—one to whom impossibilities were a plaything, and any thing difficult a mere transient cobweb for any of his intellectual brooms. Yes! Hans was the main-spring of every Pompunack work, the rope of every axle, the thole-pin for every oar.

A rare little place was this same Pompunack; none of your brick and mortar tumors—tumors which spring up upon fair acres to sap the juicy arteries of life; it was none of your towns, where the sawing and wheezing of steam, the rumbling of Behemoth omnibuses, the vociferations of industrious fruit and fish venders (leading in solemn procession, like ghosts of wagons, drawn by the skeletons of horses—horses who, after going through every walk and stage of life, were at last doomed to haunt the places in whose vicinity their better days were passed, or the grunting of noxious animals, whose owners' fines the street contractors paid, in order that their garbage-removing labors might be diminished) disturbed the ears of all save the city authorities. No! Pompunack knew nothing of steam, omnibuses, or disturbing nuisances; things which, in modern eyes, blurred as they are by the motes of money-getting and little-trouble-taking utilitarianism appear by no means unseemly or uncouth, but, on the contrary, matters of congratulation and reverence. Besides a little fort, a school-house, a church, two stores, and some thirty houses—to speak nothing of a tannery, ten

of whose like might be swallowed up by any respectable tannery nowadays—besides these, we say, Pompunack, as a town, had nothing more. And what more could it have? To be sure, there were no dirty streets; the inhabitants had no fears of broken limbs from unwieldy carts; but Pompunack had other fears, and, we may add, other comforts.

In spring, the inhabitants shook off a winter torpor, scraped the dust from uncouth spades and hoes, unpacked old dried seeds from dried bags, which had hung in garrets whose ridge-poles would have scarcely served to hang a dwarf upon, so low were they, and with these spades, hoes, and seeds prepared for a harvest. This, in summer, they gathered, or read the last Schnell Post from home, or speculated upon the quality of the puncheon of Hollands daily expected in their settlement from perilous journeys over land and sea. In the fall—by way of providing against the influence of snow and frosts—they pecked away at forests; and this, too, without apparently diminishing in the least the size of the very respectable grove, some hundred miles square, which bounded their little settlement, and which wood, moreover, was supposed to contain myriads of birds, foxes, coons, snakes, and Indians, all of whom, when decently murdered, were alike acceptable. In winter, they smoked in assiduous emulation, or vied with each other in swilling steaming gin. Thus they lived from year to year, wanting nothing but care and sorrow—wants not often advertised in newspapers or intelligence offices.

One night in the month of January, in a year unknown (and so much the better, for it is a theme with which the worthy librarian of the Historical Society may puzzle his brains), and a cold, blustering night it was, at the inn of Mynheer Speckerbach were gathered around a blazing fire, in capacious arm-chairs, eight of the Pompunack burghers, self-styled, but not self-constituted, the “General Supervisory Committee.” There were Raps Wotzenboozle, Gobs Von Gobberheyden, Shake Von Schacklebach, Peter Hytterclipp, Geoffrey Jingersnappts, Diedrich Lobermicht, and last, though by no means least, Hans Von Ritternuts.

The room which contained the bodies, mugs, and pipes of the Pom-punack Supervisory Committee was eight feet by twelve, on a ground floor, and served the purpose of bar, council-chamber, dining-saloon, and parlor; and no doubt, had the Prince of Orange, the colonial governor, or any other distinguished and now (as far as their present importance is compared with their former) extinguished titularies favored mine host Speckerbach with a call, the very room in question would have been set apart by him for the reception chamber, hall of audience, or whatever else his exuberant fancy might have chosen to style it. At the back of the room—mind, we emphasize—*the* room—gaped a huge chimney-place, whose ponderous jaws never relaxed, not even when denied for food such massive logs as now crackled and blazed within them. Before this chimney-place, blowing mimic clouds with a giant pipe, sat Hans Von Ritternuts, the President of the "Supervisory Committee." And a glorious looking president was he! First of all, there was his ball—not bald—head, with its ton of hair and scruple of brain; his jolly round phiz, rosy nose, twinkling eyes, and snow-ball chin. Then, too, his substantial corporation, encased in a two-yard homespun waistcoat, surmounted with a score of bright steel buttons; and, lastly, his gaiters, thick and stout as the frame they were attached to. Ah! Hans had been a dangerous man to female society in his day, and his glory—though fast on the wane—had by no means altogether departed.

"Neighbors," said he, by way of breaking the conversational ice-pond, and at every word he uttered "pulling upon his pipe" with a strength and rapidity only possessed by strong-tongued Dutchmen, "we have met on weighty and important business." Thus saying, Hans rolled up his tongue, sucked away at his pipe, and, as if perfectly overcome by his impressiveness, sunk back into silence and his arm-chair.

"Mein Gott, so we have!" began Gobs Von Gobberheyden, by way of filling up the chasm left in the conversation.

"Meinheer Gobberheyden, you're an ass—asses always interrupt,"

rejoined Hans, who, contenting himself with this valuable addition to natural history, relapsed into his native dignity.

The ass might have been making a series of calculations upon the important fact just evolved relative to his species—he might have been, we say, for he made no reply, and the chairman of the Supervisory Committee proceeded:

“On an important matter. The Jonkvrow Squabblemity—schoolmistress-in-chief of our goodly town, who has reigned for ten years over book and birch—has refused so many offers of marriage, that we, mine friends, should esteem her a dangerous person.”

Here Geoffrey Jingersnappts, who was understood to have been one of the many sufferers from the hard heart of Squabblemity, laid his hand on his waistcoat and groaned; whereupon all the brethren groaned in sympathy, and the chairman continued:

“Who moves in the matter?”

At this juncture, several of the members fidgeted uneasily and reached after the bowl of Hollands; but the movement was not the answer the chairman expected.

“Let us expel her,” said Diedrich Lobbernicht; “my daughter will make an excellent teacher.”

The committee were men of few words, and as Diedrich was a man not to be despised or controverted, his proposition was agreed upon; and, all unconscious to the parties immediately interested, one female was deposed and another promoted. Ah! the Pompunack Committee were rare diplomatists. They could hold a Star Chamber as well as some others.

Divers other propositions were proposed and discussed; and when the tobacco was smoked up, or rather smoked down, and the bowl of liquor emptied—which events occurred at exactly nine o'clock by the cuckoo in the corner—the sage diplomatists of Pompunack prepared to go.

Hans was barely able to stumble to the door. After looking at the

atmosphere with a succession of peculiar Dutch stares, and remarking, for the benefit of all who heard him, that it looked like snow, he started for home. His house stood at the extremity of the village, and at the bottom of a long hill. When he reached the summit of the latter—which was not accomplished before he had plunged into many a snow drift, and placed his gaiters in the condition of damaged goods—a condition to which ingenious shopmen, by dint of long diet upon saltpetre water, reduce their unsalable prints—he perceived that the village urchins, with their sleds and skates, had worn its sides to a smooth and glassy road.

“Duyvel take the boys!” muttered the old man, as he took out his pipe and coolly surveyed the scene; “there be no getting down this hill on mine feet.”

Just as he was on the point of calling for the assistance of any philanthropic neighbor who might chance to be treating his nose to a whiff of cold air, he spied at his side a substantial sled, constructed for the drawing of wood by hand. It had apparently been left there by some urchin whose sport had so wearied him as to forbid his dragging it home, and had thus left it in readiness for the next day’s use—a circumstance which abundantly illustrated juvenile confidence in the honesty of the Pompunack burghers and their families.

“Good!” cried Hans, surveying it; “I shall now get down without calling little Hans.” So saying, he replaced his pipe in its pocket, and, settling his cap well on his head, dragged out the sled.

Many years had passed since Hans indulged in the amusement of hill-riding—an amusement exhilarating but laborious, since the dragging of the sled up hill is hardly compensated by the ride down. But what matter? Men often take as much pains to win pleasures, and boys are but practicing in that, a principle which they will fully carry out in maturer years.

As we before hinted, it was long since Hans Von Ritternuts had accu-

mulated experience in the matter of hill-riding, so the consumption of full five minutes in seating himself and adjusting the guide-strap is by no means a matter of wonder.

"Hold on tight!" said a voice in Hans's ear, just as he was essaying the descent.

"The duyvel!" he exclaimed, looking anxiously around. "Who was that spoke?"

But, although he glanced sharply into the air around him, and peered closely into the woods at his right and left, he could see nothing but piles of snow and dark-tufted branches. "It was the wind," thought our Dutchman, as, thus reassured by personal inspection, he started the sled. Slowly and gracefully it glided from the summit, and then plunged down the steep. Soon the sled came in front of his dwelling, and Hans outstretched his foot to impede his progress. To his great horror, he found that the sled would not stop, and that his movement only dashed the light particles of snow and ice into his face, blinding his eyes, cooling his nose, and powdering with clearest white his stubby beard. On went the sled, faster and faster, and tighter and tighter was the grasp of the unhappy voyager upon the strap which embraced the front of his now apparently bewitched vehicle.

Gradually his house and its well-known vicinity faded from his horror-infected vision; the Van Valkinburg woods were passed; then the ruins of the old fort; and then every trace of the Pompunack highway being obliterated, Hans found himself gliding with fearful velocity over unknown paths. What appeared very singular to him was that, although gliding upon a level road, and often over places where the snow was not remarkably plentiful, the sled seemed to decrease none of its original speed; trees, stumps, roots, and rocks, all were passed over, and under, and through, without the least jar or perceptible motion. In this terrible plight, the drops of perspiration streaming from his forehead and freezing upon his beard, he was about calling upon Heaven for help,

when the same voice which had before whispered him to hold on tight—and which was *not* the wind—again spoke, and asked him how he felt.

Looking around, this time he *did* see something!

If his horror at so mysterious a sleigh-ride was already at an unparalleled height, how was it increased by the sight of a little man seated upon the back rail of the sled immediately behind him! He was attired in a close-fitting suit of iron-gray; a little fur cap, with a red tassel, surmounting a grizzly, powdered wig. His beard was long and light; and when the bright sparks from a pipe which he held between his teeth fell on the gray hairs beneath, his beard assumed a phosphorescent appearance truly alarming to a person of Hans's temperament. As a last resort, our luckless Dutchman had just determined, at the risk of breaking both his legs, to jump off the sled, when the figure bobbed the tassel of his cap, and said, in a sharp, wheezing voice, "Good evening, Mynheer Von Rittternuts."

The person addressed *might* have thought the evening was not *very* good, at least in incident; he might also have wondered how the interloping charioteer—provided a sled can have so classical an appendage—knew his name; but he made no answer.

His companion proceeded: "Ah! I see you don't know me; so much the better—I'll surprise you—I am Johannes Fraust;" and, by way of proving his identity with that well-known and odious personage, he blew a series of whistles with his thin lips; and so piercing was their sound, that, entering the Dutchman's ears, they traveled with great velocity through every vein and joint, freezing his marrow and curdling his blood. This wasn't all. He tweaked the nose of the late dignified chairman of the Pompunack Supervisory Committee, and planted a pair of nobby elbows with provoking coolness directly between his ribs.

"Hand me that strap," continued Johannes Fraust, a moment after his late jocular feat.

Von Rittternuts mechanically obeyed.

"Do you see that star above us, Mynheer?"

The latter looked and nodded.

"That is a lamp before the palace of old Boreas; what you call the Milky Way is that palace—all marble—we're going there." Johannes Fraust, like a patriot foreigner, having declared his intentions, immediately proceeded to their accomplishment.

"Up! up!" he shouted. "Now, Boreas, trot out your atmospheric railway. This way, Mynheer—away we go—ho—ho!"

In an instant Mynheer Von Ritternuts felt the sled dropping beneath him, and himself borne upward by some unseen agency with the little figure seated upon his back.

Under some circumstances the ride might have been pleasant. Hans felt this; but he could not reconcile with his dignity the idea that *he*, the undoubted chairman of the Pompanack Supervisory Committee, should not only be spirited away from earth, but should, in addition thereto, be saddled by a stranger. However, Johannes was light weight, and what little discretion remained to the unfortunate chairman effectually combated his combativeness. By this time some invisible mental agent had made a philanthropic pilgrimage into the mouth of our luckless burgher, and with pickaxe and shovel—mental instruments—had not only dug out his tongue from one corner of its cavern, but also cleared a spacious passage in the windpipe; therefore it is not to be wondered at if he mustered courage enough to ask how long the journey would take.

"We'll be at the palace gate presently, old boy; for, see, it's in sight now," rejoined his mentor and tormentor.

Hans, upon looking up, was newly surprised to observe a huge white building planted directly in what he had always supposed was the Milky Way. It was shaped like the huge butter-ladle of his good vrow; in height it was immense, and its form was perfect symmetry personified; the sides, roof, windows, and galleries appeared to be of the purest marble.

"You seem surprised," said his companion. "I'll wager a guilder

that you had always thought yonder palace, so shaped like a ladle, was nothing but stars."

Hans nodded, and continued gazing with an awe-struck countenance.

"Of course you did. Well, that's the residence of old Boreas; it is built of ice, and I'm its steward. That is our summer residence, Mynheer; but we're on a visit, throwing off the effects of our Christmas frolics."

With this description, given in a voluble cracked voice, the journey ended. They had reached the door of the palace in question. This, which was of ice, stood in the centre, and was large enough to contain the church of Pompunack, benches, chimneys, belfry, steeple, and all. It was guarded by two white bears, who, as stretched before it, seemed airing themselves to their great personal satisfaction.

"Enter," said Johannes Fraust, kicking Hans to stir up his blood, pulling the latter's arm through his own, and marching boldly in. The astounded Dutchman instinctively gathered his cloak close about him as he entered a hall whose floor, ceiling, and roof seemed of solid and pure ice. Marching through a number of similar apartments, they at length arrived in a large chamber, from whose ceiling hung massive and grotesque stalactites of ice, the native whiteness of which, in addition to the lustra caught from a large lamp which stood without, imparted to the whole palace the brightness of noon day. Presently a door opened, and Johannes said, "Behold! my master—old Boreas—approaches."

At the mention of his name, Hans felt his knees tremble and his heart beat with fearful violence, changing presently to an *andante presto* movement as a venerable yet jolly old gentleman, attired in long robes, and having a lengthened white beard, entered the apartment.

"Woo!—oh—ou—ou—ou for old Boreas—old Boreas!" whistled a chorus of wind-like voices. Hans felt his teeth accompany the burden as with a castanet.

"Ours is a democratic government, you see," said the steward, smiling; "an effect is felt and heard, but the cause is unseen."

"Mynheer Von Ritternuts, chairman of the Pompunack General Supervisory Committee, your fame has preceded you," said Boreas.

Hans thought that if his fame had started at the same time with himself, and then arrived in advance, it must have journeyed at an astounding rate.

"You are welcome," continued the frost-bearded monarch; "yes, you are welcome to my dominions, and—have you any tobacco?"

"Plenty," replied Hans, with a quickness which quite amazed even himself; and immediately his countenance brightened at the prospect of being serviceable, or appeasing an enemy, or helping a friend, just as the case might be.

"Where is it?" inquired the royal patron of the precious weed, mounting a superb throne of ice, which stood at the extremity of the apartment.

Hans pulled a large mass from his pouch, and tremblingly offered it to his celestial questioner.

"We thank you humbly, and will owe you much," returned Boreas: "take a seat. Jack, hand our illustrious visitor a chair."

The illustrious visitor felt as if he would have no objection to stand, especially when he observed his mysterious companion, the steward, draw out a couple of ice-bottomed chairs; but there was no help; so, gathering up his cloak into a small cushion, he prepared to sit down.

"Cool and comfortable, isn't it?" said the steward. Hans replied, "Very cool." If he added comfortable, it was in an inaudible tone.

"Get the worthy Hans some refreshment," continued the monarch, "although you have had plenty to-night, Mynheer Ritternuts. I looked down the chimney upon you burghers with my great telescope: fine times you were having—fine times, I warrant."

In obedience to his master's request, the steward opened a side closet, and pulled out a flask of gin packed in ice.

"Now I dare say," jocosely exclaimed the steward, pouring out a bumper for the guest, and taking a long suck at the bottle previously to committing it to the hands of his illustrious master, "now I dare say, Mynheer Von Ritternuts, you would prefer this hot and spiced, and all that sort o' thing, but *we* prefer it rather cool."

"Yes, Johannes," interrupted Boreas, putting down the emptied flask, and taking a long breath, "there's no accounting for taste—no accounting, that's a fact. Get him cream and cake, and some apple-jack," added the royal consumer of iced Hollands, gurgling a fresh quantity in his capacious throat.

The steward set them down.

"You see we have every delicacy: there would be more variety, only my chief cook and purveyor is fatigued with his Christmas and New Year's labors—he is taking a nap at the North Pole—and I hope, indeed, he will not be disturbed, for I know what a horrid bore it is to be waked up. I was once aroused when sleeping in the same region by an adventurous captain and his crew—they wanted to pouch my preserves, Mynheer, do you believe?—but I parried the captain's audacity by shutting his vessel up like cheese in a pantry, and then sending himself and crew half frozen to their country; therefore I say, I hope our beloved chief cook and purveyor will not be disturbed."

Hans added his wishes to the same total, and his host proceeded:

"Visit me, however, next summer, and you will find me plentifully supplied."

Mynheer Von Ritternuts tasted the cream (then unknown to the good colony of Amsterdam in general, and the settlement of Pompunack in particular, but by no means a new item in the Borean bill of fare), and, although he protested it would freeze his palate, ate it with great relish.

"Now, then, worthy Hans, while you are eating, Jack Fraust shall give us an account of his stewardship. What success, Jack?"

"I have done bravely, sir. I've added four inches to the Hudson's

ice, and bridged the Delaware. Seeing a miserly Dutchman browbeat a poor vrow who begged a few potatoes, I nipped them all, spoiling many a fair bushel."

"Ha! ha! good, Jack!" laughed his master, approvingly.

"Observing disobedient boys skating and sliding, I pinched their noses and ears to give them a lesson. I allowed the people farther south a trifle of snow to ride in wood upon. I sent into winter-quarters a party of French, who meditated a cruel war. The shoemakers of Amsterdam wanted work, and I cracked all the leather shoes in town. I—"

"No more at present, good Jack; you have done well," interrupted his master; then turning to Hans, who was lost in wonder and a fourth dish of iced cream, he added, "He's a fine fellow is Johannes Fraust—and I like all his acquaintances. Jack shall find some amusement for us. What shall it be, Jack?"

Hans, every moment more uncomfortable in his easy-chair, was about disclaiming with chattering breath against being enrolled as one of Fraust's friends, when the steward pulled him up to follow the venerable guardian of all frigidific dominions, who led the way into another apartment.

The new room appeared the very counterpart of that they had just quitted. Hans had been in it but a few minutes when he perceived a slight haze in its atmosphere. Before he could investigate the causes of this phenomenon, he was interrupted by the shrill voice of old Boreas.

"We are not accustomed to dismiss our guests, Hans, without entertaining them with our dioramic gallery. This is it—behold!" and he waved the stump of his pipe in the direction of a large plate of ice at the lower end of the apartment.

Immediately the astonished chairman perceived the haze of the apartment giving place to a strong whiff of cold air, and at the same time, upon the aforementioned plate of ice, which seemed smoother and clearer than the surrounding walls, appeared a landscape. Its perspective was

more beautiful than Hans's imagination had ever cherished, if, indeed, it be no libel to accuse him of such an anomalous possession. There were seen magnificent villas, parks, ponds, groves, and smoothly-laid roads.

"A beautiful sight, this," said the steward, who stood behind him.

"But behold, now, one which to my notion is still more beautiful," said the royal exhibitor.

Hans looked; and lo, what a change! The villas were capped with snow, out of whose depths the chimney-tops peered like drops of red sealing-wax on unspotted packet post; the eaves were necklaced with icicles, and the prim shutters dotted with the best of cotton from the Arctic plantations. The parks were lined with a pure white spread; the trees were powdered as profusely as the wig of their lordly owner; the ponds, always smooth, were now smoother and motionless; and along the level roads danced sleds of richer build than Hans had ever seen—sleighs filled with gay and happy crowds, muffled in robes and furs gathered from the forests and prairies of America, the mountains of Norway, and the wilds of Siberia.

"There! what think you of that?" asked Old Boreas, breaking suddenly upon his guest's wonderment. But Hans was statuelike from admiration.

"That! for your summers, and springs, and autumns," continued the snow-god, snapping his fingers contemptuously. "What is the green of nature to her pure, soft white? What the lowing of herds, the bleating of lambs, or the mower's song, to the piping winds, the merry jingling of bells, the crack of the ice beneath the sharp iron of the graceful, skimming skater; to the Christmas carol, or the wassail refrain beneath the mistletoe bough, or sung in rooms where the crackling logs upon the hearth shame even the ruddy berries which, from every window-top, speak of comfort and hilarity? nothing! nothing, good Hans! Ah! winter is the time! When does a pipe pull with the most grateful ef-

fort? In winter! When are Hollands most refreshing to mortals? When but in winter? When are the comforts of house, and home, and friends most prominent to the senses? In winter, I say—in winter—in winter; so drink the health of jolly-nosed, holly-eyed, frisky winter; he was my grandfather, and here's to him!" and the enthusiastic speaker handed his auditors a case-bottle of Hollands, which they drank, in alternate swallows, to the bottom, although it screwed up Hans's mouth, loosened his teeth, and filled his system with huge globules of ice. Yes; albeit it was cold, there was something enchanting in the taste; besides, when was a Dutchman known to refuse Hollands, be they cold or hot?

"The view you have just beheld, my worthy guest," continued old Boreas, growing more cordial as he warmed with enthusiasm, "that view is a shadow of coming events! Ay, even the acres whereon you now live shall bear witness to all these things—when you, your bones long mouldered, shall be all unconscious of the change."

Boreas was fast becoming sentimental, when he put a check-rein on his lucubrations, and again waved his wand—the old pipe! The snow-capped villas, lined parks, and dotted trees gave way to a double view, separated by a strongly-marked line.

"Look, now!" continued the snow emperor; "see you that line in the centre of our plate? That is one of the tropics. Geographers will call that an imaginary line—eh, Johannes? but it looks *rather* palpable. On one side you behold a parcel of miserable, sun-burnt, fever-stewed, orange-sucking, musquito-gnawed race of mortals, toiling with their sugars, and cottons, and rare fruits; but, thank the gods, they are not my subjects! On the other side appears the hardy Laplander, slenderly but amply supplied with comforts, and as well wrapped in skins, gliding at the heels of his faithful reindeer over polished glaciers and snows. There, too, appears the honest and toiling Icelandic, with cold all around him, and yet cooking his food in the hot fountains at his feet! There, too, the sturdy Norwegian, spearing his seals upon the fiords; there, the

Siberian, trapping the ermines for fur which shall adorn the proudest, the noblest, and fairest of other climes. Among these you see no squalid misery, no crying after luxuries, and dying for their want. Who says give me a berth in the lower countries? And who does *not* say, rattle my dice of happiness upon the upper board of fate!"

Old Boreas looked at Hans to observe what answer might be read in his dull features. His guest thought he was waiting for an answer ; so, mustering up a little courage, he stammered out,

"Winter has some bad points."

"Some bad points!" repeated the imperial host; "name one."

If Hans had been a bit of a wag, he would have mentioned the pinnacle of an iceberg or the peak of an Alpine glacier as one of winter's bad points; but he was none, and remained silent.

"Lay your finger upon one," added Boreas.

Hans did not think that laying his finger upon one of the points would stick him or prick his interrogator's passion, or he would not have answered as he did.

"Frost—freezes—poor people—got no fires," stammered the abashed burgher.

"Ha!" shouted the little steward; "he speaketh treason."

"Yes," rejoined his master. "What shall be done to the man who in our dominions advances treason?"

"According to the revised statutes of Hiems," returned the steward, "he shall become a statue of snow."

Immediately the treasonable chairman of the Pompunack Supervisory Committee felt his blood run slower, his limbs grow stiff, his sight weaken, and all sense fast hasten from him.

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A touch upon his shoulder aroused him.

"I am reprieved," thought Hans; "Johannes is relenting;" when immediately a well-known voice spoke to him and said,

"Father!"

On opening his eyes, he saw before him the chubby form of little Hans, armed with a shovel and lantern.

"Where am I?" cried the old gentleman, looking around him; "where is the palace of ice? the little steward and his master? the sled—the bears—the dioramas, and the—ah! and I ain't a statue?"

"Certainly not," rejoined the son; "but you soon would have been if mother had not become alarmed at your absence, and sent me to find you."

"Ah!" rejoined the old man, slowly arising from his snow-crustian bed, "it was the Hollands at the inn—the Hollands—I see it all."

We have every reason in the world to believe it was.

The story was read, and then, with mutual good-nights, they all prepare for bed.

To bed! The clock upon the mantel, which had ticked away the pleasant hours of the family gathering, which would not meet so cozily again till Christmas time, had struck its eleven times; the pipe was out for the third time; and the stockings now as good as new, and much the warmer too. Michael shuts the little blinds, and, as he does so, shakes the snow off his hair; while Willie, climbing on a chair, reaches up for the night-lamp, that, as he lights, flares with his father's gaping.

To bed!

But in their little matrimonial chamber that night

long and seemingly weighty were the conferences of Mr. and Mrs. Mount. They were talking of the past, and of what the sight of that package by a stranger might occasion them, and where it came from, and to whom it belonged.

One thing, however, was certain to their minds—the owner must be found. Their honesty said that, come then whatever might!



Trot the Eleventh.



Trot the Eleventh.

NINE o'clock the following morning! Uncle Ben long ago had covered his post, and was in assiduous discharge of duties which, before long, might entitle him to the medal of the model policeman.

The jocund William Mount was making his second trip with the tardy goers to the counting-room and the early patrons of the shop-keeper's tempting wares.

Willie was folding the third edition of the morning sheet, whose wondrous stores of gossip and literary wealth his fingers ran through for the thousandth time.

Old Whitey was being brushed up for his sleigh-ride, in happy ignorance of the bright buckle to the new halter, else he might have gone wild; and while his master and bright-eyed mistress were getting ready for the noon train, Michael, in the dark lawler offices, was receiving instructions for his visit to the reverend debtor. The papers had all been filed that morning; all the fees had been duly paid, the judgment entered up, the writ of execution filled up and signed. The mighty engine of the law had worked with great celerity, and Millings rubbed his hands with accustomed satisfaction.

"Shall I not wait till Mr. Flawler comes? He may have a message to send with me."

"Pshaw! what does he know of all these little things? There can be no messages in the case; the thing is clear in every point of practice. See the gentleman, and ask the money. If he choose to save himself the costs that follow after, he will pay; if not, ask where he wishes you to levy—and go to the sheriff: there's your instructions clear," returned Millings, now in his element.

"He'll be surprised to hear of it, I know," rejoined the clerk, whose feelings, it was plain to see, were at variance with his duty.

"Of course he will, and there's the fun. He'll pay it, though; it's but a trifle. These parsons always have the purses of a hundred of their flock to bleed. But there's the half hour striking, and the train is off at ten."

Folding his papers in his hat, and buttoning up his well-tried overcoat, now much the worse for wear, Michael Mount went slowly out upon his errand. As he walked you could have seen, despite his well-worn dress, that there went one who could have done justice to the best appointment of toilet ever in the drawing-room. There was upon his face the true stamp of Nature's gentility; and many a client of the office, and many a passer in the street, had wondered how long it would be before the shabby clerk would take high station at the bar.

And Mr. Flawler had not been to the offices as yet, though twenty heads had popped in through his chamber's door, and shook impatiently their dissent, when seeing nothing but the brightly-burning fire and carefully-dusted polished chair. He had been sitting at the breakfast-table, mechanically stirring his chocolate, while Daniels, standing four feet off behind, had made a bet with himself upon the question whether or no he could read the news in the paper spread out on his master's lap; but, with all his endeavors, he had only spelled through the first two lines, which, being in capitals, were easily got at from his position, and which read "TERRIBLE MUR-

DER. EXCLUSIVE NEWS BY TELEGRAPH." The reading only excited him the more, and the more he strained, until his eyes were red and watery, as if, like a devout penitent, he had been doing penance, and crying the while. He was interrupted by the ringing of the street-bell, and running out, met Mrs. Mount at the door.

"Was there a gentleman here who left a parcel in a stage last night?"

Daniels reached his hand out eagerly for the parcel, for he knew that the paper, and the exclusive telegraph intelligence about the murder, was surely his, when his master once regained this, to him, mysterious bundle.

"I've inquired at all the doors below. It was my husband's stage; and all we know was, that the gentleman got out at the corner near by."

"All right," said Daniels, again reaching forth his hand. "Wait here a moment, and I'll bring you the reward."

"It's no reward I want; but, if this package belongs to your master, I must speak to him a bit."

And Daniels, dividing his thoughts between the murder and the package, bade her come near the hall stove while he went within the breakfast-room, from whence he presently emerged, and asked her to follow him.

"Ah! my good woman, I'm very glad to see you with the package that I lost last night."

Mrs. Mount courtesied low—half to the splendid curtains by her side, half to the gentlemanly tone which seemed to her so much in keeping with the place.

“I prize it very highly, and you shall be well paid. See to it, Daniels, if you please;” and Mr. Flawler looked inside to see that all was safe. All right—the little dress embroidered with such care, now soiled and yellow with the lapse of time, and the coral necklace. How his heart heaved as he saw them!

“If you please, sir, and could give me a few moments of your time, I’d like to talk with you about them,” said Mrs. Mount.

“To talk with *me* about them—about what, my good woman?” retorted the lawyer, suddenly jerking around his chair, while Daniels, with an aside, made a reference to his master, understood to mean that this was the second woman who had secrets with the head of the house, now “clean gone for” he knew, and had always said it.

“The little dress and necklace. It’s many a day since I have seen them.”

The lawyer looked at her as if he would look her through; then rising, called to Daniels to leave them alone, and, when the butler left the room, went to the door himself and locked it, while Mrs. Mount sat on the sofa.

“Now, woman, tell me who you are, and what you know of these; and tell the truth if you would value

good words between us. You seem to be poor, and very needy, perhaps, and if you tell me what I want to hear, I'll make you comfortable for life. Where is the boy?"

Mrs. Mount was frightened; for Mr. Flawler, with excited look, had stood in front of her and poured his questions out in one strong breath with frightful vehemence. He saw it, for, wrenching at his heart—the old way with him of late—he sat down in his easy-chair. And she had just began to realize, in the confusion and excitement of her brain, that it was Michael's employer to whom she spoke. She knew it by the plate upon the door, and by his look, as she had seen him when calling once at the office, and she trembled the more lest he should know her too!

And so she stammered, "My name is Mount; my husband is an omnibus driver; and I live up town."

"But the child—where is he?"

"I'll come to it, sir, if you'll please to let me on in my own way. Some, many years ago, we lived in the middle portion of the state; the canal had just been opened, and our house was near its bank. My husband—William Mount, sir, if you please, as good a man as ever lived and breathed, sir, if you please again—was keeper of the lock where our place was. One night, some stranger folks from the West were taken sick while traveling through, and laid up at our house. A man and woman,

I think, journeying on to New York. They had a baby with them, pale and thin, and death-like to look at, for it had never had a nurse, and had been, contrariwise, brought up by hand. They had a country fever, and from the first night that they came were crazy-like, and never knew what they did until they died, when the woman, pointing to the baby, said, 'It is not mine—look—'

"She had not strength to say all that she wished, and shortly after she died. We found a letter pinned inside the baby's dress. It had that coral necklace (pointing toward the table) on its neck, and wore that dress."

Mr. Flawler shaded his eyes, but looked intently, as if he wished to see the shape in all its bearings of each word she uttered.

"We took the child, and for half a year it lived with us—"

"It was a boy."

"How did you know it, sir?"

Her listener waved her impatiently on.

"My husband left his situation, and came down with baby and myself to this city, which was the direction of the letter, 'For,' said he, 'something may turn up for the child, and if any body has a natural right to it, that person ought to have it.' I had lost two children previous to that, and this one seemed to fill their places. The first night of our coming to the city we lodged where, in the

morning, we heard that there was sickness — dreadful sickness—and my husband was alarmed. So we changed our place that day; but, in the hurry of going, the dress and letter, and the necklace too, were either forgotten or lost. We missed them, too, immediately; but, though we hunted days and days, being strangers so, in such a town, we never found the house out afterward.”

“But the boy—you will forget the boy, I know you will,” the lawyer almost shrieked, with the veins upon his forehead standing out large and purple.

“He grew with us, and we learned to love him, oh how strongly! And we had a boy of our own, born a year or so afterward, but, though he was deformed, and we were much attached to him, the elder was the favorite always.”

“Where is he now?” interrogated the lawyer, making an effort at calmness.

“Why do you ask? and then I’ll tell,” returned his narrator.

He made the old motion to his breast, and compressed his lips, then slowly answered, “If your story be true, and this necklace and dress are well identified by you, this foundling boy was my own nephew. You must give him up. I’ll educate him, train him, make him rich and great, and you shall all be rich.”

Mrs. Mount, wrought up by her own excitement, and

redoubling it by infection from her host, was weeping bitterly. She heard his words through, and every one went like a dagger to her heart. She had not thought of this when bringing in the parcel. She had only thought to hear some tidings that were good. There was a struggle in her breast, but like a lightning flash it went, and her resolve was made. She would not give him up even at the risk of a dreadful lie.

There was a momentary pause, during which each eyed the other anxiously, and then, with chafing hands and burning words, she said, "I can not give him to you. Alas! we know not where he is. He ran away a long time since."

Robert Flawler fell from out his chair as if he were dead, and Mrs. Mount rushed wildly from the house.

The time had come again when nothing pride or ambition could suggest had power to tear his sister from his heart.

Although it was almost noon, and crowds of people thronged the streets, she ran along as if a thousand pursuers were at her heels until her home was reached, when she fell almost exhausted in a chair. Little Willie had been "keeping house" while she was absent, and reading the "Hunchback of Notre Dame," which, with his morbid curiosity, he thought might some way have relation to himself. He flung his book away, and was by his

mother's side, pouring eloquent consolation, in his way, within her ear.

Meantime Michael had taken his seat within the cars, and had been rumbling through the streets without the killing any body, or without the falling of huge piles of lumber erected along the way, just before you reach the half-baked depôt out of town, in the midst of a mass of houses struggling to be free from weeds and marshy soil, now dried and frozen hard, and where some dozen factories all about filled the air with poison, and had passed them, and was steaming into the heart of the snow-clad landscape by the margin of the shut-up river, with its slender thread of iron-bound channel in the midst.

He was seated in the cars by the side of a fancifully-dressed young man, whose shirt-frill was all glass breast-pin, which he fondly thought looked so much like a diamond that even the Russian emperor could not have seen the cheat.

Michael was looking over a morning paper, when his neighbor in the olive coat and velvet collar, with a reddish vest, strewn over with blue glass buttons, proceeded to break the ice-pond of the traveler's reserve, and wade into a conversation.

"I knew you'd be astonished, my lad. I said so when I saw you turn the paper over. It's wonderful—I *know* it is."

Michael looked around with an air of real astonishment—the look of which was unmistakable—and said, for want of something clearer in his mind, by way of reply, “Indeed!”

“I invented it myself, or, rather, patented it; the discovery was made by chance. I followed chance up; for, as the Bard of Avon says, ‘Chance is but well-directed effort.’”

“I beg your pardon, sir; but I must have lost the first part of your conversation while I read. I do not understand you.”

“Perhaps you were not looking over the foreign news?”

“I was not.”

“I thought so; I said so to myself. Nor at the leader on the Proviso topic? Of course not. But you were looking over the marvels of the Pilaquarian hair-dye. Don’t be ashamed to confess it. I’ve known a thousand men to deny it to me. They had reason in the color of their hair; you have no reason of that sort. Perhaps you used it in your early days? But no, you could not, for my patent is only one year old.”

The olive coat and velvet collar paused for breath, and Michael, with his equanimity restored, replied, “I did not read about the dye you speak of, and I never heard of it.”

“Then you shall. It was—”

By this time, although the cars were rattling loudly

on, the green-coater's high tones, and his looking around, had gathered something of a crowd about the two, which but encouraged the speaker to more vigorous elocution, until Michael felt himself a target through which a dozen others were to be riddled.

“It was a relative of mine who found it out. He was a colonel in the army. Very white his hair had turned in consequence of sleeping so often in the Florida orange-groves, while the Seminole war was pending. The oil distilling from the fruit had turned his hair. He had a bad swelled face, and by the physician's advice procured for it a wash. He observed that wherever the latter touched his hair or whiskers, the color slightly changed to a darker hue. He was a bold man, and devoted to science; so one day he rubbed the wash all over his head, and sure enough the hair was changed to the same color it had been in his youth, and, what is more, the roots all came out natural again.”

Here a red-faced, high-cheek-boned fellow asked for the name of this wonderful compound, which being furnished him upon a card (which favor all the by-standers shared in liberally), he retired by the stove to spell it out.

“And, just to accommodate a generous public—not for gain—no, no, indeed!—I carry a little of it with me when I travel—only two and sixpence a bottle. Who will try it?”

Any farther participation in the philanthropic motives or conversations of the proprietor of the famous, accidentally-discovered, and liberally-patronized "Pilaquarian," so far as Michael was concerned, was stopped by his arrival at his station.

Where, jumping from the cars, and calling at the clerk's office, fortunately on the way, to file a needful paper in the new county, and then asking the direction of the rectory, he set out up the hill which led to it on foot. The road was broken well, and he ran on merrily to keep him warm, and so was not very long in reaching the grounds of the Reverend Matthew Sparkler. As he went within the gate, the sound of laughing voices came upon his hearing, and made a flush of shame to cross his face to think what devil's errand he had come upon. Approaching the portico by the winding path, he saw so beautiful a face, that, pausing for a moment in the shadow of a cedar clump, he looked upon it with a speechless, almost breathless interest, that he never had felt before. The face was covered with smiles, and the eyes looked tenderly into the countenance of an elderly gentleman who was strapping a thick horse-blanket on the back of the large white horse harnessed to the little cutter-sleigh. This was his debtor, then, and riding out. He was just in time.

Approaching with his firmest air, he passed the greet-

ings of the day, and begged the pleasure of a few minutes' interview.

"I'm just going into town, and by the next rail-way conveyance. Would to-morrow do as well?"

"I am from town myself, sir. It's but a moment's say."

The rector's face was overcast with shadow from within as he examined the speaker closely. "Ah! I recognize you. You are Flawler's clerk. This is my daughter, sir; speak on."

Michael bowed to Alice, and as he dropped his eyes from hers, he felt the blood a tingling all his ears.

"I am his clerk, and come from him—that is, from his office, with this execution and demand."

"The note! a judgment! how is this?" said the rector, grasping the paper extended by the lad.

"The case was called; your lawyer was not there; we took default and judgment. Can you pay it, sir? I'm sorry, but it is my duty."

"Alice, dear, within; Simon, put up the horse; we'll look at this more closely. Walk into the library; there'll be no town to-day for us."

And Michael, scarcely knowing why, sprang to the sleigh to hand the daughter out, who, with a haughty air, that would have seemed most comical to any one who knew her well, waved him aside, and jumped upon the

piazza step without aid. While Old Whitey looked around in grave wonder, and shook the bells about his neck and on his back inquiringly; then walked away toward the stable after Simon, who shook his fist from behind the horse's head, vauntingly, at the young intruder.

Alice heard the two below for some minutes talking together, when she was sent for, and her father said, "My dream was right, and Heaven spoke to me through it. The debt is twice as much, with interest and costs, as it was first. I could raise the money, by borrowing, at any moment; but my pride will never let us beg. The house and grounds are not my own. My furniture and books are sacred to our home. The horse—"

"Oh, not Old Whitey, papa! I've twenty dollars lying away up stairs; take that," exclaimed Alice, in a tone of simple grief, which caused Michael to double up his fist, and internally shake it at the invisible Millings in the hazy distance.

The father mournfully smiled, and said, "The horse must go. He is the only luxury we have, and we must part with him, and let no soul among our neighbors know it."

The daily joke about Old Whitey's going was, indeed, to be a fact. And Alice, so accustomed to rely upon her father's judgment, though she knew not why, felt that Old Whitey must go.

“Old Whitey and the sleigh, they can go on together—now as well as ever. Just endorse their taking them on the writ, and drive them into town; two hours will bring you there, and all will be as quiet as you please. The sheriff of the city can levy silently upon them there, upon a second writ; and there’s a wagon in the barn, if these are not enough.”

Poor Michael dimly saw what havoc he was making, and, in his mind again, he cursed the law, and all attorneys wheresoever they were. The bright eyes of Alice now looked at him through their tears; the happy look was gone from off her father’s face.

He could not say good-by; he could not make a sign of his condolment, though he felt for them with all his heart; so, writing a receipt upon the writ, he walked toward the stable, Alice and her father slowly following after him. Old Whitey heard them coming, and had backed himself out in a twinkling, and stood rubbing his head against his master’s shoulders. Simon—perhaps, under his present fit of indignation, now increased a tenfold by the sight of all the family weeping and looking so sad (for Alice and her father were to him the largest kind of a family to think of in his mind), I must call him Mr. Lobb—was now behind the stable door, shaking his fist violently at Michael.

Old Whitey looked around in wonder. Still more did

this increase when he saw the stranger get into the sleigh and take the reins. Nor would he budge an inch, but shook his bells, and pawed the snow into a shower of ice against the outer dash-board of the sleigh. But when his master's voice was heard to urge him on, he paced along the carriage-way as gravely as a funeral horse returning from the cemetery.

They watched him through the gate, and up the hill, and on the inner ridge-way of the road, until Old Whitey was hidden from sight by the long line of fir-trees at the summit of the hill.

"There'll be no halter with the silver buckle needed now, my pet," said the rector, smiling mournfully, as he led his sobbing daughter into the house, and left Simon to prepare a good warm bed against Old Whitey's coming, when the stranger lad from town should bring him back.

Old Whitey's coming! when will that be, Mr. Lobb?

Trot the Twelfth.



Trot the Twelfth.

It was almost dusk when Old Whitey and his new driver came upon the head of the Bloomingdale Road after their interior drive. The former was low-spirited enough, and rattled his bells with a melancholy sound. Nor did he at all relish his little journey, or the absence of the usual kindly voices at his back.

They were soon full upon the city stream of pleasure-seekers who beset the various avenues of the metropolis, whenever snow enough has fallen to serve as apology for the appearance of a "Lapland cutter;" and nearer as they came toward the cloud of smoke that hung in air before them, the throng of flying horses, and the dashing up of snow, and jingling of the bells, and loud uproarious mirth, which swelled upon the ear, grew thicker, and faster, and louder; for the evening was to be a moonlight one, and all sorts of rivalry existed to get possession of the rooms and cozy bars in the out-of-town hotels, and hold them for the dance and gay carouse against the latest comers. Old Whitey, as he slowly trotted on, was hard beset, and had his nose rubbed by the buffalo-robcs which were dashed beneath his head, and had his breast struck by the balls of caked snow which flying hoofs before vauntingly sent back. But he was too much busied in his own peculiar grief to notice the novelties and trials of his position. Michael had seen some service with his father on the stage-routes, and knew a thing or two about the management of horses. All the panorama of the horses, sleighs, and robes, and jokers around, was perfect fun to him, and made him so good-humored that he scarcely heeded the bits of traveling sarcasm heaped upon his "countrified" equipage. Now a span of glossy grays went by before a cutter filled with hair-brained gold coin

tossers, looking, as they lay, like the wise men of their native city who went to sea in a bowl; now a single driver, braced against the dash-board, seated in his "pung," practicing wrist-gymnastics by the assistance of the reins and bit; not far behind would be some others, seemingly endeavoring, as they drove, to see how near they could come to a violent death without accomplishing a corner-job.

And so, without an accident, Michael brought Old Whitey to the stables out of which his father drove his omnibus, and where he knew the hostlers; for his plan was formed to leave him till the morning, when "the office" might determine what was next to do.

"That's a levy — almost, anyhow — I'll bet my life upon it," said a voice from one of the hostlers, as Michael stopped the horse.

"Don't bet what isn't valuable, my cove," returned a voice pitched in a sarcastic key; "bet something worth the while. Bet peanuts, and I'll go you half."

"The horse is only ready for the sheriff, or this spriggy lawyer here," added a third, clapping Michael on his back.

"It's my belief he belonged to somebody who's run through all his property, and tried to kill the horse, but couldn't, 'cos his hide was so tough it kept his blood from coming away," continued the sarcastic tone.

Alas! poor Old Whitey! Here was an example of the mutability of earthly things. This morning you were fondly petted in your stall, and lovely eyes wept your misfortune; at nightfall you are within the law's merciful clutches, and railed at by a race of omnibus hostlers. Heaven defend you from their hands and power! If you go upon the line, the heart of Alice Sparkler breaks—I know it will.

Michael had given his orders, and was in an omnibus upon his way to the office, in hopes to meet with Millings before he left, perhaps with Mr. Fowler, who, if cognizant of what was going on, and that the debtor was a clergyman, and of what a heavy parting there had been, would interfere to throw the costs off, any rate. But what could he say to the old lawyer if he met him? It was an even chance whether he knew him, although office-boy and clerk within his office, for he had been proud and quite reserved, and left all details to Millings. At every step the horses took in riding him through the crowded thoroughfare, he felt more and more ashamed of the hand he had had in the business, mere automaton that he was.

The hostlers took Old Whitey from his harness and led him to a stall, the sarcastic one venting jokes the while he brought him water and oats.

"I wonder what his name is?" said one of them, who was an oldish man, and stumped about upon a wooden leg. He brought a lantern (for it was now quite dark, and no moonlight through the window where they were), and gave the horse a survey. "He looks for all the world like Major Fusil's Old Whitey! Just such a tail, and, as I live, the bullet-marks upon his neck. It must be.

"Soh, Old Whitey! soh, old boy!" continued the wooden-legged hostler, holding up the lantern.

Old Whitey brought his nose around toward the light, and gave a gentle whinny at the caressing voice he heard.

"It is, old boy, Old Whitey," cried the wooden-legged man, running for some favorite brand of feed, while all the others gathered around; and even the sarcastic one was silent when he understood it was the famous horse belonging to Major Fusil, which they had heard about from old Drumsticks, as they called the wooden-legged hostler — a discharged soldier with a pension, the latter just enough to keep him in legs and tobacco.

"There, Old Whitey! you don't remember me, I see; but you're the trump I know as well as my alphabet.

"This 'ere is the hoss as you've hearn me tell on often, boys," continued Drumsticks, while Old Whitey plunged his nose into the favorite feed, and for a time forgot his own little manger and beautiful mistress. "And he deserves a pension more than any of us. Such a one as he

was to smell out Injins—the pesky tribe that skulked among those everglades, and peppered you afore you knew that any thing was wanted! Didn't he save our lives once in the camp? I'll tell you of it."

And the others gathered round, although they had heard it oftentimes before; for now, with the horse in view, it was like re-reading some old fairy book, with all the context illustrated by the finest plates.

"I had the outpost nighest to the swamp one night—one awful nasty, drizzly night, when the men had camped themselves quite in a huddle, and turned in to their straw as early as may be. We hadn't heard nor seen an Injin for a week; and some of the younger officers, who had only been in skirmishes as yet, had written to the papers home to say the Seminole war was ended; ended, indeed, when it was just begun!

"A little tobacco, Sawney, there's a trump," said the narrator, interrupting himself. Sawney was the sarcastic one, and handed out a plug of the weed which would have been a weight for any nervous man to carry, from which the wooden-legged soldier bit enough to heel a common boot with, and then tossed it back, adding, "I'm the commissary next week; draw on me then for your quids.

"Well, I was trotting round to keep me warm, and had the lock of my musket well wrapped by my sleeve,

in readiness for emergencies. All of a sudden I felt some warm breath on my cheek, and, turning round, I saw this Old Whitey here. As we afterward found, he had gnawed his tether-rope through, and his hoof-marks were deeply in the soil all about the tents. He rubbed his head upon my shoulder, and then turning his nose toward the swamp, neighed loudly, as he always did in an engagement. Again he rubbed my shoulder; again he turned his nose toward the swamp; again he neighed. I passed the word, and had the camp aroused. The drum beat to arms; the fires were replenished, and burned brightly, and all the companies stood upon their muskets until morning. There was nothing done—no attack, and not a musket fired. The younger officers were mad enough to think a false alarm had called them up. But Sergeant Picketts and myself went to the margin of the swamp just to reconnoitre a bit, and there we found the rushes all bent down as fresh as if we'd done it ourselves, and we picked up a wampum belt, fresh beaded. We counted out six different trails, and there had been a troop of Injins in the night all ready for surprise; but Old Whitey here, this brave old hoss, *he* smelt 'em out, and gave the alarm in his dumb way, else we'd a been but poor provender at present, and leastwise had to buy us wigs, while our scalps were dried like mummies in some swamp hole."

Old Whitey had listened attentively, seemingly, to know all about it. In fact, Sawney, the sarcastic auditor, looked at him once or twice, expecting to hear him break in with some forgotten circumstance, or to correct the narrative of the enthusiast soldier; and when old Drumsticks came up to him at the end, and cried again, "Soh! soh!" Old Whitey gave a series of whinnies, and rubbed his nose against the petter's shoulder in grateful recognition, and held it there until the omnibus sleighs, coming in for the first installment of "put-ups" for the night, demanded more fresh oats and all the bucketsfull of water to be had within the stables.

Meantime Michael had reached the offices, and just in time to catch his senior manager before he turned the key upon the precious papers in the old desk with the quaintly-fashioned legs.

"Well, what's the word—the cash or levy?" said Milings, pulling his chair toward the grate, and knocking down the lumps of coal, as if they were refractory debtors, who were so ungrateful as not to pay their costs and interest instanter.

"A sort of levy. I've got a horse and sleigh; and there's a wagon behind to take, if those won't do," answered Michael, with a saddened air; "I've left them at the up-town stables."

"Where's the sheriff?"

"I never saw him. The rector wished it done all quietly, for he's as proud as any emperor.

"And well he might be," added Michael, musingly, to himself, "with such a daughter."

"Not seen the sheriff? and took the things yourself?" replied Millings, with a look of horror; "it's flat grand larceny; I'll prove it out of Russell," and he made a jump toward the library.

"He gave me permission to bring them. We'll issue a writ here, and let the sheriff act here," said Michael.

"But meanwhile there may be a rescue. I think the principles of rescue might apply," and the attorney stroked his chin dubiously.

"Pshaw!" rejoined Michael, growing warm; then laughing, in spite of himself, at the idea of the gray-haired rector, in his black silk cap, and his weeping daughter, taking back the horse, "He's not the man for that."

"All right, then, and we'll put the sheriff's fees within our pockets, or arrange it somehow;" and Millings, unlocking the old-fashioned desk, drew forth a portly volume, and proceeded to make an entry in it of all that Michael had done, adding a foot-note to the "horse and sleigh," which read "by consent of parties."

And then the two went home.

Trot the Thirteenth.





Trot the Thirteenth.

MICHAEL's father, William Mount, was among the first installments of the return drivers at the stables that night, and was at home quite early. Little Willie was in highest glee, and sat retailing all the jokes from the funny novel he had read that afternoon. But Mrs. Mount was silent, and looked sad; nor could her husband fail to

notice it. So, when he finished his tea (they did not wait for Michael, since it was uncertain when he came, although his father heard of his arrival at the stables), he said,

“Come, Molly, what’s the trouble? Did you find an owner for the things?”

Little Willie saw at once that something was to come; was he not home when she had burst, all weeping, into the house? And with his chair he reached down his small lard lamp, and with his book went for a while into his little room.

The wife burst into a flood of tears.

For a moment William Mount looked puzzled; then drawing up his chair toward her, said,

“You found him, then? What knew he of the things?”

“It is his sister’s child! He wanted to get him for his own—to—to educate—and—and make rich—”

Here sobbing out at every sentence—

“And gr—gr—great, and ever so much be—besides.”

And even the omnibus driver, in all storms and seasons, although hard and tough was his physical frame, felt the warm tears welling to his eye at the thought of losing him, now that he was just about to do them credit. But then the thought was changed: “To educate and to make rich,” he repeated to himself. “It is, then, for the best.

He'll be the happier in the end. But who was it you saw?"

"Mr. Flawler, on the Park."

"Why, that is Michael's lawyer-'boss.' His own nephew, did you say?" returned the latter, walking up and down the room. "Then we *must* give him up;" and the hardy, honest fellow groaned through all his frame, while his wife continued her convulsive sobs.

He turned to soothe her: "There, my Mary, think what good may come to him through this. I know it's hard to give him up—he's like our own to us; but let us learn at once to bear up against the overturn. It's only one spoke out of the family wheel."

"It's—it's not that, Bill; but I've been and told him such a lie. I—I—couldn't help it, when he said he wanted to take him, and the thought of the falsehood and the deed came together. I told him he was lost, and runaway."

"Poor wife! poor Mary! you have never lied before!"

"I've suffered for it, Heaven knows, all day. And when I told him, he fell upon the floor all dead-like."

"This is very bad, and I must go to him to-night, and tell him all about it," said the husband, after a moment of sad reflection, and going affectionately toward his sobbing wife.

Mrs. Mount threw her arms about his neck in a torrent of grief. But soon he arose, and, reaching for his coat, went out upon his conscientious errand with a heavy heart. He felt to the full, as he went along, all that he was about to do. The past rushed over his blunt mind, and the future spread itself as well. He had not felt how near and dear the boy was until now; but through all his misgivings and his sorrow came a voice, "It's for his greatest good."

Mr. Flawler had only fainted, and was soon revived by Daniels when Mrs. Mount had left the room that morning. He would have called her back, but he had never asked her residence, and had forgotten her name. Such gossip in the kitchen as the occurrence made was never had before. And even Daniels, with his quizzicalities upon his master's sanity, was outdone this time by the cook, who declared that things were coming to a pretty pass when stranger women, one after another, came into the house to hold their secret conferences with its bachelor head; when portraits were dug out, and baby-clothes and necklaces paraded by 'em on the parlor tables in the broad daylight. She was going to give warning, that was clear.

And now, when "William" rang the bell, Mr. Flawler was seated, quite himself, before the fire, studying it in an intensity of self-abstraction, and with his hand upon

his heart—the same old ugly spot. He was so used to seeing strangers now that his nerves remained strong and unvarying as the omnibus driver came into the room—not awkwardly, for all the mirrors and flowers on the floor, seen through the dimly-turned-on gas in the purple-belled chandelier, but with a firm and manly step.

“Good evening, sir. I’ve something short and private that I wish to say.”

Here William Mount looked at Daniels, who was busily engaged in hunting for nothing on the mantelpiece, and not being able to find it handily, Mr. Flawler motioned the butler to withdraw, and he complied—as far as the outside key-hole, where, in conformity to the resolutions of the kitchen cabinet, “that something of the secret must be got at,” he listened breathlessly.

“My wife was here to-day, and told you something not the truth,” said William Mount, coming to the point at once, for in his speech, as on his daily route, he could not bear to turn a corner.

“The boy is neither lost nor runaway, but living with us now,” continued he, while his listener bounded to his feet and clasped his hands.

“Is this another trick? Is this all a device to extort money?” he cried, with energy.

“You’ve seen him this many a day; he’s clerk now in your office, and was runner for a while! It’s Michael!

He's the boy to whom the dress and necklace belonged, and whom we took an infant from the dead travelers, coming this way from the Western lakes."

"My office—clerk—this many a day! Oh, heavens, if this be true! And I've not known him all the time! I scarcely recollect there's such a person in the rooms. Your hat, and let us find him instantly."

And, seizing the omnibus driver by the arm, he fairly pushed him in the street, while Daniels just had time to bear his eye and ear in safety from the door into the shadow of the stairway landing, while he went down in the basement to report. But whether it was that the office-boy had stolen a necklace, or some one had stolen a necklace from the office-boy, Mr. Daniels's mind was not fully made up about. The more he twisted what he heard, the greater mess he made of it; while the cook, growing bold to see his confusion, stoutly retorted "that he was just as bad as any of 'em; and it was just exactly like the men, who always hung by one another, through thick and thin."

Trot the Fourteenth.





Trot the Fourteenth.

SUNDAY at Millward Grove! A bright and beautiful day; the snow all packed like marble in the roads, and the crows and little birds strutting or hopping about in the rich sunlight on the crusted snow of the fields. The river holding its own, too, as yet. The iron monster of the rail-road lying up in ordinary under his little shed be-

neath the hill. The horses browsing lazily within their stalls, or winking at their church-day harness. The rival bells of the church and chapel ringing out upon the frosty air with grateful music, one could hear for miles—ringing out as if getting into triumphant practice for the Christmas season, only two days off.

Old Whitey's stall still empty, as it was on the afternoon the day before. The poultry, creeping through the little hole beneath the stable door, turned up their heads in wonder to find no grains of oats had fallen on the floor beneath the manger. Simon, with his cleanest shirt on, had looked inside just to see if his last-night dream was true, and the old white horse had come into his stable all unknown to any one.

Mrs. Lobb had spread a fine breakfast on the table in the library, where the good old rector sits conning an old sermon—for he has no strength to finish the one begun in the early week-day; while Alice, who had been crying in her sleep the whole night through, is looking up the texts for Sunday-school she should have had prepared the night before.

The breakfast is over. It was taken in almost silence; not that the rector had so weak a mind to mourn a little loss of property, and on a Sunday too! But this had been his first trial for some years—perhaps the beginning of misfortune, and through an old friend too! and

he was thoughtfully working out in his mind the fitting lesson of affliction Heaven, no doubt, intended he should learn.

The breakfast is over, and the bell is ringing for the Sunday-school, as Alice and her father walked toward the vestry-room, beside the church upon the hill hard by. It was not unusual for them to walk; within his creed the rector had his rest for servant and for beast upon the Sabbath-day; unlike so many loud-mouthed Christians of our time, who drive in splendid carriages to church, and while they work to heaven inside, leave the poor coachmen on their boxes by the outer gate, to climb to Paradise as best they may! And that Old Whitey was not brought out told nothing to the children, nor to the people generally, who, as the Sunday-school came out, crowded about the doors as if it were a fair-day. But Simon's tongue had spread abroad some tidings of a terrible mystery, that had resulted in Old Whitey's driving into town by a stranger lad. "It must be for good and all," said Simon, "else why would sweet Miss Alice cry?" And all who saw the rector come on foot, and saw his daughter's saddened face—more beautiful than ever, so it seemed to them—knew at once how much Old Whitey would be missed. He would be missed the parish through. They could not help to think of this all sermon-time. And even the militia major, who always rode

him upon county training-days, and who was accustomed to speak his responses loudly, and to pay such strict attention to the text and homily, was thinking selfishly (but who can blame him, under the circumstances?) how great his own loss would be. What would he do to show his new coat and his waving plume to the advantage that they looked when on Old Whitey's saddle?

The mysterious circumstance of Simon Lobb's story also attracted great comment at the Sunday evening gathering which always came together at the residence of Widow Nichols, in her room back of the grocery, where, beside the railway depôt, every week-day she dispensed in small quantities dry-goods and groceries to her village patrons, and such moieties of gossip which survived her Sunday evening demolishments. The Widow Nichols was not to be shaken in her belief that an honest store-keeper, like a barber's apprentice, should always be able to amuse a customer with such talk which philosophers call the small coin of conversation. Her Sunday evening gatherings, then, were valuable. They were part of her stock in trade, and cheaply purchased at the expense of the tea, sugar, pound-cake, and preserves which brought her wares together.

On this occasion, Mrs. Lobb, the housekeeper, had been dexterously invited, in hopes that she might divulge the terrible mystery regarding the horse and sleigh, but just

as dexterously Mrs. Lobb had made up her mind to stay away. She was sadly missed, and conjecture, instead of cross-examination, ruled the roast among the half dozen guests.

"I hope it's nothing derogatory to the good man's character," quoth Miss Rebecca Spyles, speaking in a tone which plainly meant "I hope it is;" for Miss Becky, as the waggish village beaux would call her, despite all her frowns and anathemas, was a prominent class-leader in the sect wherëof she was a bright and shining light, and ever on the alert to find a speck upon the character of any bishop or priest of the Church which she loved to call the Church of England.

"Some freak of that proud girl Alice," rejoined Mrs. Betsey Pulver, the wife of the village doctor, who never had forgiven the rector for sending into town, the last illness of his daughter, after medical aid.

"Although he is my rector," cried the Widow Nichols, "I must say he has always been a very mysterious man to me: no relatives to visit him; no friends; does all the preaching up himself; and got Old Whitey from the Lord knows where, and now sends him—"

"In the same direction, no doubt," interrupted Miss Mary Birch, the village teacher, who claimed to be at every step of life a wag.

"Yes," said Widow Nichols, innocently, "and I think

so because the boy, who Simon says drove off the horse, came in my store as he came from the cars to inquire the way to Sparkler's house."

"He was a stranger, and there's the mystery," broke in Miss Becky. "Strangers are suspicious men, and suspicious men in families bode no good, which makes me hope, I say, there's nothing derogatory on foot to the poor man's character."

Beyond the force of this feminine syllogism the gathering never got toward the realm of 'certainty—about which, in the distance, gossip loves to hover—but soon retired to their beds to spell it out as best they could; and not a villager in Millward Grove but dreamed at night of Old Whitey and his mysterious going.

There was little sleep for Alice and her father; the former mourning for her favorite's loss, the latter wondering what could be the motive which induced his old collegian friend to wrong him so; while Old Whitey, with the Drumsticks hostler for his body-guard, well filled with feed, slumbered all peacefully in his foreign stall.

Monday morning, and the day before Christmas! It looked upon great changes to the Mounts and Robert Flawler. *He* had seen his nephew, and recognized in every feature (dolt that he had been to never recognize them before) the beauty of his spurned, dead sister, but now

remembered in all the freshness of their early love. Michael had spent all Sunday with his weeping family, and Willie's heart was nigh to break to think that his brother—not much older than himself, it was true, but oh! how much the better and the wiser, to his mind!—was going away to be rich and great. It was not enough that Michael was to see him every day—he wished him always by him. And, besides, he was not Michael any more to them; his very name was changed, and he was now to be known as Arthur Wiley—Arthur from his grandfather, and as the letter from his mother requested it should be, and Wiley from his father's family name. Nor was Willie very much softened in his grief when Arthur took him to his new-found home, and showed to him the library, that was twice as large as his circulating one, now almost read through, and whose books were bound as beautiful as annuals; and Willie thinking in his boyish pride how short a time it should be before his “Magic Sleigh-ride” might be upon the shelves, as popular as Michael's magic sleigh-ride of two days before, behind Old Whitey, had proved to be to him.

Monday morning! and Arthur in a “spick-and-span” new suit of black—a band upon his hat (which his Uncle Robert followed too, though long delayed—an act of tardy justice, which to do thrilled him with pleasure, mournful, it was true, but pleasure in his inmost heart),

and looking most unlike his former self, was seated over breakfast with his kinsman, hearing, for the hundredth time, the sad confession of his uncle's sin, and kindly stories of his mother in her maiden prime, and of his father, whose matter of enmity was now a buried thing. The picture had been all polished and varnished by the careful hands of Daniels, who, now the thing was all cleared up, was quite himself again, and nursed his leg beside the kitchen fire with proud and jealous satisfaction.

Arthur felt curiously happy, he knew not why, and yet so sad at times. He seemed to have quit his former body, as it were, and only carried his original soul along. Already castle-building had begun within him. It was something—though Heaven knows he meant no disrespect to William and to Mary Mount, the father and the mother of his infancy, by the thought—to feel his mother was a lady, and so sweet a lady as her portrait looked, and that no bar of circumstance was now presented to his rapid rise in the world, if he were only true to himself.

Monday morning, and uncle and nephew went together to the office. Millings as yet knew nothing of the matter. What a wonder he would make when hearing all! thought Arthur to himself. And as he looked upon him thus dressed out in his elaborate toilet, coming in with his uncle Flawler, he would lose himself in a labyrinth of perplexities.

They entered together. Arthur passed an acquaintance on the stairs, the copyist in the office underneath; he did not know him in his altered dress, and tipped his hat to him as he went. Millings was out, and on the floor a paper which Arthur stooped to pick up. A copy of a new writ in "*Folio*" versus "*Sparkler!*" A thrill of reproach passed through his mind. In the excitement and the flurry of his new position he had forgotten all his sympathies. Old Whitey, was he cared for? Perhaps even now he was being sold.

"What have you there, Arthur, my boy?" said his uncle, noticing his motion and the paper in his hand.

"I know it will all be right now! this is the best of the new discovery! I know that you'll arrange it when I tell you all," exclaimed Arthur, rather spasmodically, and twisting the paper in his hand as a wig-maker would turn some locks of deadened hair.

"Millings has gone up to the stables with the sheriff. We must save the horse. And then the old rector's face of joy!" continued he, almost leaping from the chair within the inner office, where the two had now taken seats.

"Millings—the sheriff—old horse—the rector!" repeated Mr. Flawler, who, as we have seen before, knew little of the details of business going on in his office in such small matters of court practice, wherein his skill and learning were not called in play.

"Oh! I had quite forgotten that you knew, dear uncle, nothing of the thing. You see *our* client—"

It was clear to any stranger observer, had he been present, which he was not—for only the up-town dandy law-student of the place was in the offices at all; and he was by the front-room grate, burning his boots thereat, while he was conning the pages of a sporting magazine, all hid away between the binding of some old Reports. It *would have been* clear, then he will say, that the late Michael and the present Arthur was getting on finely, and was claiming all the clients for his own.

"Our, that is, *your* client, uncle, has a snap judgment against a village rector up the river, the Reverend Matthew Sparkler, whose horse I took because—"

The uncle started for a moment from his chair, and made a gesture with his hand toward his heart (the same old way), and then arrested the motion as he looked more steadily into the earnest, glowing face of his new nephew.

"Sparkler, Arthur? the rector up at Millward Grove?"

"The same, dear uncle. Do you know him and the horse?"

"Know him! his wife, if living, is your father's sister and your aunt."

"My uncle! then Alice is my cousin," exclaimed the delighted Arthur, blushing all the while.

The uncle was in a musing mood for the minute. Here

was more reparation to be made, it was clear, and he was glad of it—some amends for all that blank of generosity upon the past.

“But what’s been done?” pursued the lawyer, heeding not the exclamations or the blushes of his nephew; “you spoke of a judgment and a seizure.”

“It was a favorite horse; he’s now at father’s—that is, in the stables of the line of stages.”

“Yes, I understand, my boy.”

“And Millings, lest the thing should fail of being right in form, was going with the sheriff to take the horse away. It was almost a relative to them—to—to uncle, and to—to Cousin Alice (here the blushes heavy on his face again), I know; they wept upon his leaving so.”

“To-morrow’s Christmas day!” exclaimed the uncle, starting to his feet. “I have not kept a Christmas day this fifteen years, and I’ll begin. This favorite horse shall meet his friends again, and they shall know their own and my new-found relation. Arthur, boy, we’ll all go up to-morrow to the Grove; I’ll pay the debt of ‘Folio,’ and none shall be the loser by our Christmas day.”

Trot the Fifteenth.





Trot the Fifteenth.

ARTHUR knew it was all right now, as he went up town toward the stables, the beating of his heart timing the merry music of the sleigh-bells in the crowded thoroughfares. The clouds were moving away, and the rainbow was emblazoning itself before him, that was clear; and soon his newest-found uncle and his Cousin Alice would hail its hues as well.

Arriving at the stables almost out of breath, he found himself all in good time to hinder farther trouble and expense. Millings was standing by the door, and a deputy of the sheriff, who rejoiced in an infinitude of dirty collar and red whiskers, was standing by his side. The attorney did not know him as he came along—that was clearer than any thing yet—for he bent his eyes upon him as one will gaze upon a person or a scene he has beheld somewhere shadowed in a dream. The deputy did not know him either, although but several days before he had been with Michael to a lumber-yard on an errand of replevin, which is just as opposite to an errand of mercy as it well could be, without looking into the windows where this mercy lodged!

At length a gleam of intelligence on the subject seemed to enter Millings's mind. He rubbed his eyes, then examined with them carefully the band on Michael's hat (the abdication of the name as yet unknown to him), his new-gloss clothes and unexceptionable boots, and seemed to take an idea, as a schoolboy takes a lollipop, with sudden gusto.

"Here is a go, Docker," he said to the deputy sheriff. "Some relation of the clerk we have has turned up to die, and left him money of a sudden, just as Sawney Mitchell, the Scotch boot-maker in William Street, had an uncle die a year ago this Christmas coming. I know it by the crape upon his hat."

By this time Arthur stood before them ; his earnest face was all a glow as he passed the morning to them.

“The horse?” he asked, before Millings or Docker, the deputy sheriff, had a chance to act on the former’s idea about the rich relative, or proposed a quere as to the astonishing change in Michael’s dress.

“All right,” answered Docker ; “he’ll pay the costs and something over, maybe, for my trouble, eh, Millings ? Then, as for the principal, why, that’s to be talked of, eh ?”

Millings rubbed his hands and looked over his shoulder as if he saw the horse escaping from beneath the clutches of the law, but only met the gaze of the wooden-legged soldier, whose face was gathering like a thunder-cloud to think of the indignity about to be put upon a horse who had faithfully served his country.

Arthur placed in the hands of the deputy sheriff a countermand of execution, signed by his uncle.

Millings looked it over and said, working himself up into a passion, “Rich relative or no, my boy Michael, you’ll have a piece of my mind. It’s a swindle. A blindfolding of justice. You’ve gone and worked on the old Hunk’s feelings, when—”

“Not so fast, Millings, if you please ; you’re speaking of my uncle, as I have found Mr. Flawler to be ; another uncle owns the horse ; and debt and costs, at least your

share of these, will all be paid by the old Hunk you speak of."

"His uncle! no doubt his uncle's—but with the three balls!" quoth Docker, moving mysteriously aside, as if cogitating in his own mind a connection between the new prosperity of the clerk, the pawnbroker, and the police-office.

It was of no use to say another word. Millings was rooted to the stable plank on which he stood. He might have been one of those figures, carved of wood, which stand of late at victualers' shops, so meek and statue-like he seemed. That Flawler had turned out to be Michael's uncle was not so startling, perhaps, but that he should pay the debt—oh, wonderful!

It was clearer than all the evident occurrences thus far that Millings was destined to take more severe lessons in astonishment than he had yet received.

While Millings stood and stared at Docker, Arthur went in to see the horse. He was in prime order. Let the wooden-legged veteran alone for that! He had been enjoying the best stall in the establishment, having the best straw for his bed, the most careful rubbings hostler ever bestowed upon the greatest favorite of a race-course after she had run her three-mile heat, and repeated, of a chill November day; and as for oats and feed, the "leavings" on the manger and the floor about spoke loudly on

the score of plenty. Yet, as Arthur thought, Old Whitey looked disconsolate and rather lifeless in his manner. But when he spoke to him, the ears pricked up, his old coat quivered from fetlocks to mane, and a low whinny came from his half-turned-round head.

“Courage, old fellow! one more night, and then for home again on Christmas day!”

Was the old fellow thus apostrophized deaf to the meaning of these words? Was he a stupid, blockheaded horse, that he did not comprehend the whole? It's my opinion, and it would be yours, if you would listen to the version of the story hereabouts from the wooden-legged soldier, that Old Whitey stretched himself upon his straw that night and dreamed, as only horses in his sad and exiled state can dream, of the *home* manger, and the *home* feed, and the *home* greetings of his beautiful mistress.

There was never a better day for any Christmas vouchsafed by any almanac-maker. The air was clear, but cold and bracing. The snow still crisped, like marble powder, on the ground. No wet; no fear of wet. From Battery to Madison Square the smoke was busy from the thousand chimney-tops, preaching, in its vaporish way, a practical sermon of good-will to the atmosphere. A thousand pudding-bags were airing for the morning's boiling work. A thousand clusters of bright eyes, in a

thousand cozy drawing-rooms, were shining upon the tokens of the season so bountifully spread by generous and affectionate hands. A thousand prayers, mounting like incense, asked admission up at heaven's gate from grateful mortal hearts.

The Mounts were up by daybreak. Had not Arthur, looking like the gentleman he was now bound to be in all time to come, spent his Christmas eve with them, and told them of the next day's excursion to another uncle, and how it was insisted that they all must go up as well? And had not Uncle Ben, through Mr. Flawler's potent intercession with his friend the mayor, obtained a leave of absence all the day? And was not the wooden-legged soldier combing his hair all right, and blacking his one boot, and smoothing the rough end of his oak leg, against his invitation to make one of the body-guard that was to escort Old Whitey to his old quarters? asked all along of his being a comrade of the horse in the much-vaunted-of-by-him Seminole campaign. And was not Daniels in his glory, preparing for a magnificent servant's holiday, with a splendid round of beef, and a fine array of side-dishes, and a dessert appropriate for a bishop, all ready for the dinner's cooking of the Christmas day, while master and young Mr. Arthur, whom all the kitchen cabinet began to love already, took a drive into the country on some blessed errand whose exact purport they did not care just then to know?

Fine day at Millward Grove as well.

The rector and Alice in somewhat better spirits, and more resigned to the loss of their favorite, whom they did not mention to each other. The former even omitting to read the paper up from town, because he feared he might see some accident nearly concerning Old Whitey, or at most an advertisement of his sale. Simon Lobb had turned his attention to the taming of some rabbits he had snared, in hopes his young mistress might take an interest in new pets. The villagers all knew the true story by this time, through a village hostler who had seen Old Whitey in his town quarters, and were wondering among themselves what sort of a sermon their rector would preach upon a Christmas day—the favorite's loss so near his heart.

The sun came up higher and higher, and Arthur and his uncle, in a light sleigh by themselves, set out for the residence of the Reverend Matthew Sparkler, followed by a small omnibus sleigh, which William Mount had borrowed for the occasion, and drawn by a span of his favorite horses, in which were seated, snug as figs in a drum, Mrs. Mount and Uncle Ben, and little Willie and the wooden-legged soldier—the latter holding by a halter Old Whitey, who trotted after, gayly enough—and the wooden-legged soldier's wife, who was to be cold and poor no longer, and who now was quite a figure for the

joy her well-timed hunt in the little closet had brought to Flawler and his nephew. The sleigh which Arthur, as Michael, had taken down, was not the thing for Old Whitey to run before; Arthur had settled that in his mind; and the freight-man at the rail-road depôt had already ticketed for Millward Grove the neatest sleigh ever out of a factory, and a full set of harness besides.

On they drove, through the little streets, and along the broad avenues, and out upon the country roads. Old Whitey was in his day of triumph now! He felt it as he winked his eyes at the wooden-legged veteran, who, as they went along, told to the admiring Willie, and the happy matron mother, and the delighted sturdy old stager of a "Bill Mount," so many stories of the horse, that the honest omnibus driver almost began to think his hostler friend a sham, and his acquaintance with so wonderful a horse all moonshine.

Arthur and his uncle talking of the future as they drove along. The former was to go to college in the spring—his uncle could not lose him yet—and afterward the two were to travel in foreign countries and see the world. Perhaps his rector uncle and the bright-eyed cousin might be in the company as well, and then what happiness!

The intervening miles were soon passed over. Millward Grove was now in sight. Arthur and his uncle

far ahead of the Old Whitey cavalcade, in order to announce the coming, and explain the whole of an enigma. Service had just concluded in the village church, and the good rector and his daughter were getting ready for the dinner, which Mrs. Lobb was trying to make of super-excellence, in hopes that creature comforts might be doubly comforts now. The couriers of good tidings sped up the hill toward the rectory, and down toward its gates. Simon was by it, seemingly in waiting. He recognized Arthur in a moment, through all his array of fine clothes and in his pomp of equipage, and, by his alacrity in opening, seemed to have an idea that something favorable "was in the wind," now the young gentleman who drove Old Whitey to the city was returning, and on a Christmas too! At the sound of the sleigh-bells ringing up the carriage-road, Alice and her father sprang to the window, looking out. They also recognized the youthful messenger of law and injustice of the week before in a trice. And the rector recognized Flawler as well, through all the lapse of years which separated their parting, and his countenance clouded. Was it not enough that through his means he had already been persecuted to the full? Must his enemy come to him in person, and on a Christmas day?

Without regard to etiquette or form, the two sprang from the sleigh, and, pushing into the house, the lawyer

had the rector by the hand, and Arthur was blushing by the daughter's side, before the two inmates of the rectory could recover speech, in their surprise from the sudden intrusion.

"Forgive me, Matthew," said the lawyer. "I know you will when you hear all. I knew no syllable of the wrong inflicted in my name until its consummation. I've buried the past of unforgiveness. Here is my sister's child—your nephew, newly found!"

And Robert Flawler, having jerked out these words in a way so different from his ordinary precision, wrung his old companion by the wrist as though he would have dislocated it in exquisite delight. The turn of Alice now to blush, as Arthur, after being embraced by his reverend uncle, claimed the cousinly privilege of a kiss (the dog, he did), and paid his respects as if he had known them all his life, and brought out into full play the natural manners of the natural gentleman, which had been so many years hidden in his humble home and silent in his humble walks of life.

"Old Whitey is behind, Uncle Matthew, and under escort. And Cousin Alice, look at this, and get it ready to your liking for his coming," said Arthur, drawing from his surtout pocket a small but strong and handsome halter, with the brightest silver buckle ever made.

Her very wished-for gift! Her very dreamed-about

gift the night before! Her Christmas happiness all realized before her eyes!

"They're on the hill now," said the lawyer, who was at the window on the look-out, while Simon, who was doing hostler duty in the porch, forgot his charge at the sight of the old favorite coming down the slope toward the gate, and ran to open it.

"The dear old fellow!" cried Alice, clapping her hands in a manner that would have driven into a fit of frowns and indignation some old prudes, who save up shelf-loads of propriety, but which, being a charming bit of nature (and Robert Flawler was beginning to love such sights), was a thing for any one to moisten eyes at if they would.

Up came the escort—a troop of villagers and children at the veteran's heels; Old Whitey pouring out his whinies on the well-known neighborhood with great profusion; the wooden-legged soldier singing loudly snatches of the most unheard-of songs in the most unheard-of keys. Alice and her father on the portico, in waiting, in a perfect impatience of delight. Arthur and his uncle looking on, the latter with most unaccustomed emotions of interest.

Old Whitey's head was on his darling mistress's arm in a minute's time, and the rector fondling him the while. Simon capering about in great delight; running to the barn to see that all was right for his reception (sly dog!

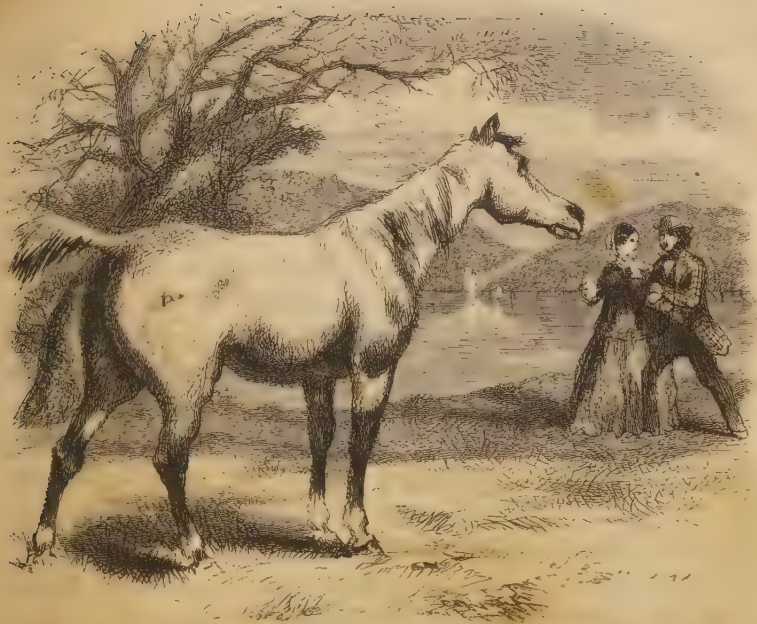
as if he had not measured out the oats a dozen times, and shook the clean straw up at every leisure hour of his time).

But this is not to be chapter the last, else I might go on and tell you how Mrs. Lobb almost became demented with her exertions among the poultry, in extending her efforts for an ample dinner; how, in preparing the latter, she outdid herself, as all declared; and how the wooden-legged soldier quite fell in love with her, and forgetting, or ignorant that Simon was her son, asked the latter, in confidence, how much the old "un" had laid away in any old stocking that might be stowed in some unheard-of drawer; or how the two uncles and the two cousins had a sociable, cozy dinner in the library, as confidentially as though they had known each other intimately all their lives; or how William Mount and his wife, and little Willie too (the soldier resisting stoutly, however, longing to reel off some of his astounding stories at a real gentleman's real dinner-table), insisted on making another party by themselves in the rectory kitchen, and torturing Simon and his mother with delighted questions on all imaginary subjects, and explaining to them again and again the goodness of Arthur, the new nephew, and what a great man he was bound to be.

But it belongs to this chapter to tell how, when the afternoon had well worn on, the whole household follow-

ed Simon and the wooden-legged veteran to the barn (they carrying out some bottles of most fruity port wine, and glasses to match), where Alice, at a given signal from the rector, buckled the splendid new halter on Old Whitey's neck; where, also, Arthur told the story of his driving to the city; where, also, the "veteran" was indulged with the narration of one of his choicest anecdotes; and where the whole party, with every feeling of cordial delight, drained bumpers to the good condition and long life of OLD WHITEY.





Trot the Sixteenth.

THREE years ago! Two Christmas suns upon the rectory at Millward Grove, and two more Christmas sermons from the rector's study. And now the third, as the old year smooths out his wrinkled forehead, gives holiday token of being nigh at hand.

Its approach creates an unheard-of flutter among the

kitchen cabinet of the St. John's Park mansion, that (like all cabinets should be) is yet a unit, with butler Daniels and his nursing leg for the largest lines of the circle. The old park-keeper in the venerable park is brushing up, for the thousandth time since the equinoctial, the fallen leaves in the graveled pathways, and praying, in disinterested mood, that no snows may come to keep the children from their Christmas fun of sober tag, when Christmas sun shall gild the ball of the old chapel's summit. The servants in the cozy Knickerbocker mansions all about are cleaning up the door-bells and the door-plates to the brightest tense of Christmas glow. The sexton of the chapel pauses in the chancel for the hundredth time, with pious reverence of admiration for the Christmas greens round pulpit, altar, gallery, and organ-loft hung. The shopmen and store-women in Canal Street, round the corner, are bustling behind their counters, and smiling at the troops of happy faces glancing at the wonders through the shining plates of glass. The destiny of Turkey has been settled in a thousand mansions to the household delight. A hundred bushels of cranberries, scattered through the city, glow upon ten thousand kitchen tables. Schoolboys walk with quicker step toward school, and, not prepared to talk with certainty of Christmas events at hand, recount again and again the exploits of all remembered Christmases gone

by. How they study the weather and the state of the ponds in the city suburbs!

There is an unheard-of flutter, too, in the household of Mrs. William Mount, whose husband long since quitted the box of the coachman, and, under patronage of the Flawler butler, with plenty of cash from the Flawler strong-box, opened a huge grocery-store at an eligible corner to the Flawler mansion hard by. The worthy grocer's wife is slightly stouter than when she stood on the door-step with the embroidered dress within her arms, shaking with apprehension, and distressed between duty and hope. She looks happier, though; for there are many more embroidered dresses—one from the fair fingers of Alice herself—in the little red closet, near to which rocks a little cradle, with a little occupant, whose first Christmas now is nigh at hand. A new comer—a new Michael, born to take the place of the old one—to give to little Willie more delight, as he comes silently from his little room, with his fingers and thumbs all black with the signs of the author's art. Willie has not long since left the Free Academy, its best and most honored pupil; his highest ambition gratified; for is he not the hump-backed scholar all the neighborhood around, and glorying in the title? Is he not a writer in a daily newspaper office, where his sparkling paragraphs already begin to creep out of the obscurer corners nearer and near-

er to the charmed domains where the editorials sparkle? And has he not his "Magic Sleigh-ride" in the printer's hands, and almost ready for the Christmas stockings of the land?

Unheard-of flutter in the rectory at Millward Grove. Great changes here. A wing beside the house, almost as large as all the house itself, where books by thousands vaunt themselves in golden backs. Across the inner lawn, half hid by fir-trees, a newer building with a Gothic roof. What else but the new temple for Old Whitey? You hear his cheerful neigh-at every footfall on the lawn. He is exacting of attention, now, and almost spoiled with presents. Polished bins, with all the choicest brands of feed and oats therein which William Mount can find—be sure he is a judge, and picks out all the best. Old Whitey's bags are known at all the depôts by the freight-masters, who seem to take a care in them beyond the care bestowed on aristocratic-looking trunks and carpet-bags. The temple has an upper chamber filled with brier-smelling hay, that never felt a drop of rain after the mower's scythe came in the meadow where it grew. Close by his side another horse, and still another: one an Andalusian pet, whose sides have never known the indignity of shafts—whose heels have never felt the shame of lumbering wheels behind—whose back, these two years gone, has known alone the weight of gentle Alice Sparkler. Old

Whitey shows no jealousy—he need not; for every morning comes his loving mistress to his stall, and every morning lifts he his head above the rail to get the looked-for hand caress. Simon Lobb is still alive, and still around the rectory grounds. As sleepy in the morning as of old. As fond as ever of his mother's pies, and as ready as ever to bear the Christmas pudding, marked, as his old spelling-book told him puddings should be, with the largest "P." For a twelvemonth his stable duties were shared by the wooden-legged soldier, who, after the Christmas greeting, quartered himself at trifling wages. But, climbing up and down the wintry hills, the rheumatism set into his limb with tenfold strength, and soon he lay where now he sleeps beneath a grassy hillock to the barn-yard hard by, which he himself had staked out the last sunny day when he had hobbled forth.

Great changes in the rector's purse. For all the village, and the set which gathered yet, as of yore, in Widow Nichols's tea-room, knew how Robert Flawler, the great York lawyer, had revived and won a dormant suit about some lands which the rector's father died possessed of—won it to the great disgust of Millings, who declared it was a suit worth fifteen years' attention. Had it lasted so long, that gentleman would not have enjoyed its tenancy; for Mr. Flawler soon left practice, and going abroad with Arthur for a foreign tour, transferred it all

to a friend, who, knowing Millings better than his late employer knew him, parted company. Millings is still in practice, sharp, and shrewd, and sly, but better known, and therefore less injurious to the client world of the metropolis.

But Alice, now the heiress, was the simple-minded, graceful, loving Alice that she was of old. Her eighteenth birth-day just gone by, she was an embodiment of perfect loveliness of womanhood. How many a fortune-hunter, how many a belle-chasing fop, went up and down the river every year, and, looking at the charming country-seat he took the rectory to be, knew nothing of the loveliness so near at hand—so unapproachable, indeed, were he but on the lawn, with step directed toward the rose-embowered porch.

Unheard-of flutter in the rectory at Millward Grove was the sentence written in the paragraph above. But where? The grounds were sleeping in the lazy sunshine of December, and the leafless trees unprowled through by a breeze. Nothing but still, cold, hoar-frost atmosphere about. Old Whitey and the Andalusian in their stalls in indolent digestion. Simon napping in the hay-mow, snugly covered up. His mother resting in the big arm-chair, with cooking-books in great profusion all about. The soldier hostler in his barn-yard grave at quiet rest. The rector in his study, calm and happy to

all appearance. Alice in the drawing-room with open letter in her hand. Yet—yet—flutter in all hearts.

And now the rector drops his pen and leaves his books, and now he stands beside his darling, who yet holds the letter in her lap.

“Well, pet! our goodly Arthur writes a dashing hand, I knew, but who’d have thought so bad a one my Alice could not read it in an hour’s time?”

“An hour, dear father!” stammered the blushing girl, handing the letter toward him?

“Yes, a full-hour. I have revised my Christmas sermon and read the ‘Churchman’ through while you have pored over the letter of our kinsman traveler.”

More blushes, and more loving glances in her father’s face, where shone the spectacles with mist clouding over them. Both hearts fluttering to one point.

For were not Flawler and his nephew then, perhaps, in port? What Collins steamer ever failed of day? And had she not, six months before, when such a melting letter came from Naples, in this very room, sent back a loving promise whose fulfillment was at hand? Had not Miss Becky Splyes, at Widow Nichols’s, waxed in wrath at the enormity of marriages between cousins, and denounced the rector as a scriptural Balaamite—or some such curious reproach—for sanctioning such a thing; quite puzzled, nevertheless, to tell them why, when Mary

Birch, the village teacher, book in hand, challenged to know a single reason on that head.

The third Christmas since Old Whitey's grand return, but still no presence of expected ones at Millward Grove. No steamer and no news. All quite despondent but the philosophic Simon Lobb, whose faith in Collins and his steamers had only been equaled by his persistent cry of "Down with the banks!" and "Hurrah for Jackson!" with which he voted every year, long after Biddle and the hero slept in mother earth. He had even been out into the river a dozen times with boat and spy-glass, looking miles below into the Bay; returning many times to aver, in most positive terms, that the steamer was coming; until an ignorant stranger would have thought the gallant vessel was actually steaming up the river to land her precious freight before the rectory lawn, which swept as closely to the beach as the remorseless railway would permit.

The sermon over. A return. And still no presence of expected ones within the rectory grounds.

But hark! a sound of crisping wheels upon the hill. How bounded her young heart at the sound! How bounded Simon to the kitchen door, and, only looking to

see the now well-known Flawler carriage at the gate, ran swiftly, shouting, to the road.

"My best respects. I ask your pardon. Very rude, but glad," said honest Simon, as he swung the gate back on the wall, and in drove the returned travelers, who, merely nodding, dashed around the curves and reined before the door.

How handsome he looked as he stood in the drawing-room beside the blushing Alice! How beautiful they both appeared in the eyes of rector and lawyer, who, after a hurried greeting, involuntarily turned together to admire them!

I should want another lease of Christmas type to tell at length the rapid conversation interchanged at dinner-time, while hours went by, and Mrs. Lobb fidgeted below, to think her famous pudding came back as it went—untouched. Though Simon did not mind it, for from the gate he rushed to Old Whitey's stall, and groomed and rubbed the venerable beast until even himself feared that one more such grooming would lose the favorite all his flowing mane and shining hair.

Nightfall—just light enough to give effect to the lengthening shadows in the river from the Palisades across the Hudson—and the cousins stood upon the inner lawn in rest after a brief but memorable walk through the graveled cascade path beyond.

“How happy I was when your scruples were overcome, dear Alice; for with you to bless my future, as you first christened my present prosperity and happiness, no station is too high for my ambition, and no lot too care-burdened with such an alleviation as you.”

There was no answer from the blushing girl who hung on Arthur's arm. There needed none for him. Her ringlets trembled as they drooped. Her hand was stronger pressed upon his arm. And never eyes looked purer love than when, a moment after, they were raised to meet his glowing face.

As thus they stood, some steps were heard, but close at hand. They turned, and there stood Old Whitey, who, never prisoned, came and went from out his stall at will. And with proud instinct he had come to greet them.

“Bless him, good old fellow!” cried the lover, springing from the side of Alice, who, far from jealous, clapped her hands, and laughed until the wood around was merry with its music.

How proudly Old Whitey stood while his flanks were patted and his mane was threaded by hands which, months before, had grasped the hands of titled dames in foreign climes, amid gay music, and in gilded halls—patted and threaded, too, by fingers whose rosy tips would well become a queenly sceptre, if loveliness, and grace, and virtue had their proper sovereign sway.

He stood a moment, and then turned away toward his stable, neighing as he went.

“I do believe he knows it all. It is his greeting. Shall he eat his supper with our wedding feast, dear Alice?”

“You owe it to him, Arthur, for—as Willie hath it in his story, the last holiday he spent with father and myself—Old Whitey gave to you the only magic sleigh-ride you may ever have.”

THE END.

Wm

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